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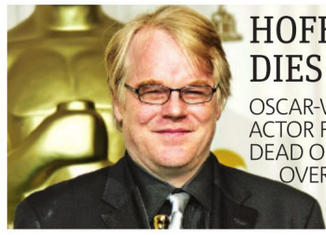
Will you answer the call of the Yeti?

5-km obstacle race, the Yeti Challenge, set to make its Winterlude debut this month in Wakefield, Que. PAGE 3

Avoid these budgeting pitfalls

From inaccurate projections to vanishing cash, most people's budgets are a bust for a few select reasons PAGE 19



HOFFMAN DIES AT 46

OSCAR-WINNING ACTOR FOUND DEAD OF APPARENT OVERDOSE PAGE 10

SEAHAWKS DOMINATE

The Seattle Seahawks' Malcolm Smith celebrates as he returns an interception 69 yards for a touchdown during Super Bowl XLVIII against the Denver Broncos on Sunday, in East Rutherford, N.J. The Seahawks dominated the Broncos for a 43-8 win. See page 25 and metronews.ca for more on the game. EVAN VUCCI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Big jump seen in snow-plow damage claims

Winter woes. Number of claims filed by private residents has been rising since 2010, according to city data

City of Ottawa snow-plow operators are increasingly finding themselves in accidents involving damage to residents' private property, with complaints to the city last year totalling 1,180.

According to data provided by the city to Metro, the number of claims filed by Ottawa residents for damages caused by snow plows has been rising since 2010.

In 2013, there were 91 claims filed for damages caused by city plows, while in the previous year there were only 37.

David White, manager of litigation and labour relations, noted in an email to Metro that Ottawa saw about 272 centimetres of snow in 2013, compared to 171 centimetres in 2012.

Nearly the same amount of snow fell in 2011 — 173 centimetres — when the city was hit with just 30 claims.

In 2010, 27 claims were filed with the city. About 111 centimetres of snow fell that year, according to the city.

As of Friday, Ottawa residents had filed eight claims against the city in 2014.

Interestingly, a higher accumulation of snow doesn't necessarily equate to a higher number of complaints, according to the data.

For example, in 2010, Service Ottawa received 1,026 complaints about private property being damaged by city and contractor snow plows.

But the following year, the number of complaints dropped by about 24 per cent to 776 while there was an increase in snowfall of 62 centimetres.

Unsurprisingly, 2013 saw the most complaints with the whopping 272 centimetres of snow.

"Damage is usually noticed after the fact and could have been caused by any vehicle," wrote Kevin Wylie, city manager of roads and traffic operations and maintenance, in an emailed statement. "Damage to garbage cans or sod is sometimes unavoidable and is rectified by the city."

The city said if operators are involved in a collision, they are required to provide the other driver their information. Also, the operator must file a formal collision report.

JOE LOFARO/METRO

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Witnesses sought

Police investigate sexual assault in ByWard Market

Two witnesses and a suspect are being sought by police after a woman in her late teens was allegedly sexually assaulted in the ByWard Market early Saturday morning.

Ottawa police say a male suspect approached and sexually assaulted the woman at approximately 12:45 a.m. The suspect then followed her until she asked for help from two male passersby who intervened.

Police want to speak with those two men and are looking for the suspect.

The suspect has light brown skin, appeared to be in his 20s and about five feet seven inches tall with a skinny build, and spoke English with an unknown accent, according to police.

JOE LOFARO/METRO

LRT construction

Highway 417 to see road closures

Construction work related to the LRT project will mean that starting Sunday until Feb. 9, there will be off-peak lane reductions on Highway 417 in both directions between Nicholas Street and the Highway 417-174 split.

In addition, there will be westbound lane reductions on Highway 417 near Parkdale and along Highway 174 east of Blair Road, the City of Ottawa says.

As well, the southbound Vanier Parkway on-ramp to Highway 417 westbound will be closed nightly from Sunday to Feb. 8. METRO

Race organizer Élisabeth Gosselin is pictured running on Sunday at Ski Edelweiss in Wakefield, where her Yeti Challenge Winterlude event is taking place on Feb. 8. CONTRIBUTED

Winterlude: Are you ready for the Yeti?

The Yeti Challenge.
New 5km obstacle race inspired by summer Spartan race

JOE LOFARO
joe.lofaro@metronews.ca

Think The Spartan Race, but with fluffy snow instead of slimy mud.

That's how Élisabeth Gosselin describes The Yeti Challenge, a new family-friendly obstacle race that is coming to Winterlude for the first time this year in picturesque Wakefield, Que.

The Feb. 8 event, inspired by the mythical Himalayan beast, is a five-kilometre timed race on foot with obstacles such as climbing ropes and monkey bars around winter wonderland at Ski Edelweiss. The popular ski resort is located about 34 kilometres north of downtown Ottawa.

Gosselin, the event's director, said she saw a business opportunity with the lack of a large-scale obstacle race during the winter, since most of them happen in the summer. The Spartan Race in Ottawa, for example, drew thousands of participants at their June 2013 edition, also held at Edelweiss.

"I just decided to do it because the obstacle race is very popular right now and we don't have a lot of activity during winter except for snowshoeing and skating and cross-country skiing," said the Gatineau resident. "So I wanted to have a new winter sport."

What also sets The Yeti Challenge apart from other races is that there is a separate, one-kilometre race for kids. Gosselin tried to make the race something everyone can enjoy no matter how fit they are. The even will also include an element of scavenger hunt, with the first person to find a hidden yeti logo getting a bonus on their race time.

"If you like hiking, you might like my race. You don't have to be an athlete to do it," she said. "If you like winter sports and enjoying yourself in the nature, you will like it."

Registration includes a hot meal, parking, and a supervised locker area, according to the event website.

For more information on the event, visit yetichallenge.ca.

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City hoping to move forward with Phase 2 of transit plan

Transportation committee. Vote coming for LRT, O-Train extensions, environmental assessments

JOE LOFARO
joe.lofaro@metronews.ca

The city's transportation committee will vote Wednesday on approving planning and environmental assessments (EAs) on the east and west extension of LRT and an extension to the existing O-Train.

Phase 2 of the city's Transportation Master Plan (TMP) calls for the Confederation Line to be extended from Blair Station to Place D'Orleans Station. The western LRT line will run from Lincoln Fields Station to Bayshore Station.

Provincial legislation requires the city to complete a study to highlight what the construction and design of the extensions would have on the social, cultural, physical, and natural environment in the areas.

To save money, the city will fold the east and west EAs into the one for the western LRT corridor.

Orleans Coun. Bob Monette and Innes Ward Coun. Rainer Bloess noted in the report that they have concerns about noise pollution once the work begins on the eastern extension.

"As the EA moves forward, it will be very important to seriously review the need for sound barriers along the 174 from Jeanne D'Arc Boulevard to Trim Road to mitigate the noise impact to existing residents," Monette said.

Also considering ...

The eastern LRT EA is expected to take 24 months to complete, while the western LRT EA is expected to take 12 to 15 months to complete, the report said.

- **Extension.** Committee members will also consider a report on an eight-kilometre extension of the O-Train from Greenboro Station to Riverside South with five new stations.
- **Airport.** The same report will also map out a potential LRT link to the Ottawa Airport.

Don't let these sculptures elude you this winter

Ice sculptures captivated many at Confederation Park Sunday as throngs of people flocked to Winterlude this weekend, encouraged by warmer temperatures. The 36th annual festival, running Jan. 31 to Feb. 17, has a more historical flair this year as it is being organized by the Department of Canadian Heritage rather than the National Capital Commission. For more photos of the winter festival, go to metronews.ca. SEAN MCKIBBON/METRO

Two men. Gatineau cops seeking home invaders

Gatineau police are looking for two men who pushed their way into a home and tied up the residents after asking to use a phone. The incident happened Saturday night around 6:15 p.m. at the home at 14 Cartier St., police said.

The men allegedly fought with the married couple who owned the home, tied them up, then went through the house.

"We don't know if the home was targeted specifically or why it was targeted at all. That's what we need to figure out," said Lt. Paul Lafontaine. "We aren't sure if they took anything."

The two men fled the residence and the woman was able to get free and run to a neighbour's house for help.

Both victims were taken to hospital with non-life-threatening injuries, Lafontaine said. He said the suspects were in their 30s. METRO

Sexual assault. Martial arts instructor charged

An Ottawa martial arts instructor has been charged with sexual assault, assault and sexual exploitation.

Police say Ahmad "Sam" Saroughi has been under investigation since October, after a woman alleged that she had been inappropriately touched by the 46-year-old then.

Saroughi is co-owner of Saroughi Martial Arts at 1844 Bank Street, where he regularly teaches.

Information sought

Anyone with information is encouraged to contact Ottawa Police Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Section at 613-236-1222 ext. 5944.

A website for the business lists Saroughi as a black belt taekwondo instructor.

LUCY SCHOLEY/METRO

Project Anarchy. Ottawa man turns himself in

A 19-year-old man wanted in connection to a major cocaine trafficking network in Ottawa has turned himself in to police.

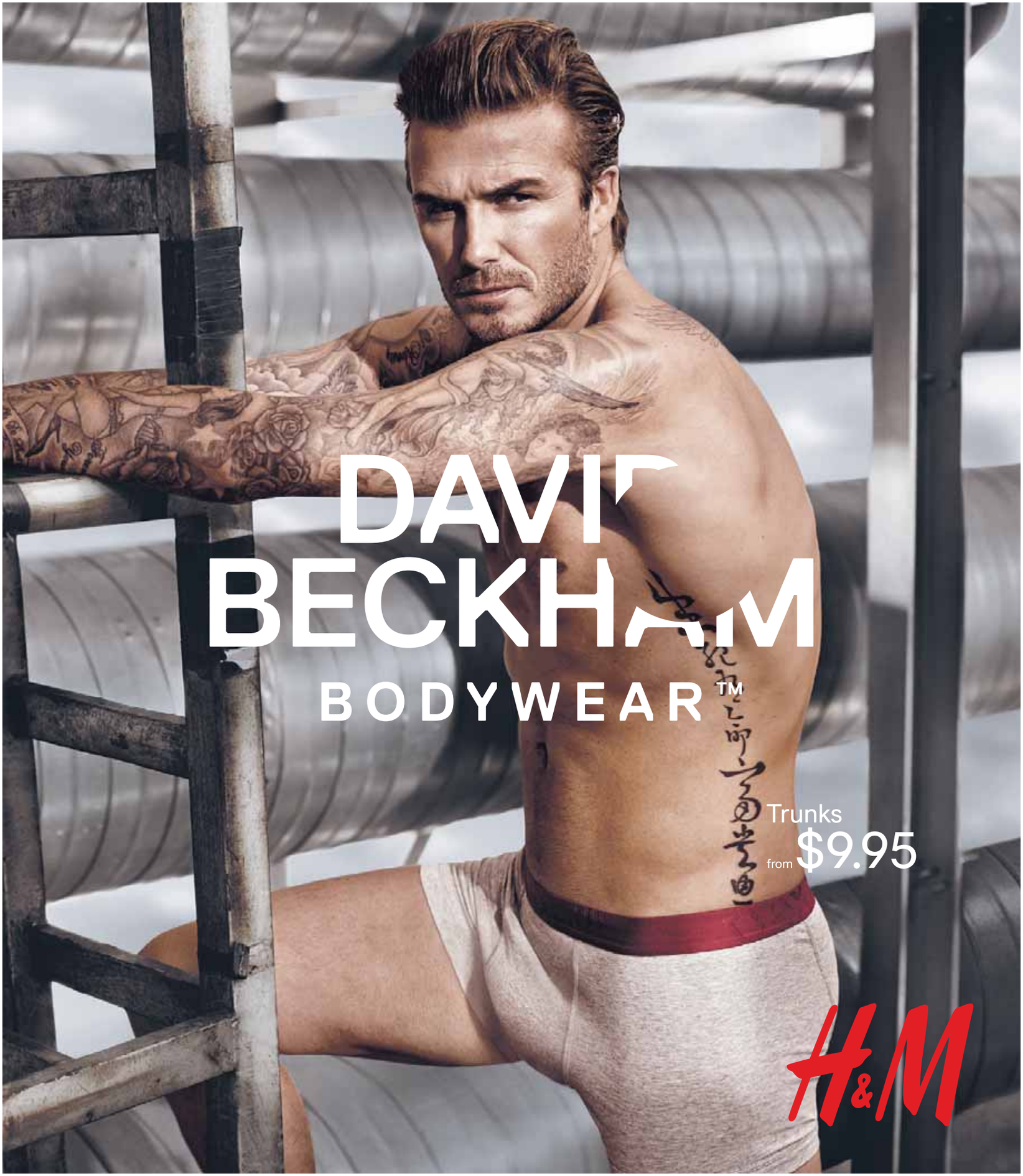
Reagan Kavanagh was wanted on a Canada-wide warrant for Project Anarchy, a two-year crackdown of the drug-trafficking organization. During that time, police seized 24 kilograms of cocaine worth $12.25 million.

Police also arrested six people and laid 75 charges in total, including trafficking cocaine, conspiracy to traffic cocaine and possession of proceeds of crime under $5,000.

Police are still searching for two other Toronto men: Ravinder Grewal, 32, and Bassam Elouta, 34. Police say they are believed to be dangerous.

Anyone with information on the two men is asked to contact Ottawa police or local police authorities.

LUCY SCHOLEY/METRO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Street View not just for streets anymore, local photog says

Google Business Photos. Growing appetite online for sneak peeks of business interiors

TREVOR GREENWAY
trevor.greenway@metronews.ca

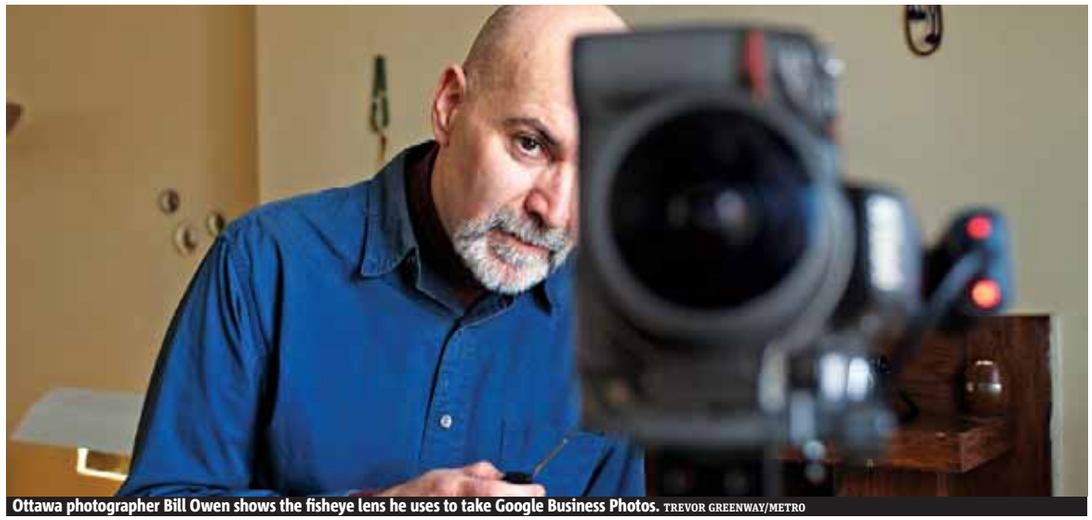
So you're taking someone out for supper. You really want to impress him or her, but don't know all the foodie hot spots in the city. Reviews only provide for so much information. How do you really know if the place is as grand as you've been told?

An Ottawa photographer is making it easier with Google Business Photos that can take Internet users on a virtual tour of any building in the city.

"Those walkthrough tours are similar, in fact, identical to Google Street view, only on the inside," said Google Trusted Interior Photographer (TIP) Bill Owen who has shot a few dozen Ottawa businesses over the last year. Wielding a 180-degree fish eye lens, Owen snaps high dynamic range (HDR) photos from every direction inside a business.

He then patches the images together to create a seamless virtual tour that allows people to explore the inside of any business they may be thinking about patronizing. Owen says websites just don't do justice anymore, especially with restaurants.

"So with the Google business photos, you can actually see what it looks like. If you are going to a restaurant, a lot of the times you are with a client or you are taking somebody out for dinner and you want to check the place out before you go."



Ottawa photographer Bill Owen shows the fisheye lens he uses to take Google Business Photos. TREVOR GREENWAY/METRO

He expects the greater business community to jump all over this in the next few years.

"This is Google and if Google is doing this, it's not going away," says Owen.

To check out his work and see the Google Business Photos in action, visit his website www.eyestir.com.

A screen shot from Choir!Choir!Choir!, an informal singing group in Toronto. Similar glee clubs are starting up in Ottawa. YOUTUBE.COM

Casual choir trend hits Ottawa

A modern-day choir trend is coming into Ottawa's spotlight. It's not the type of musical gathering that requires an audition or even the ability to sing in key. This choir's range includes classic rock, modern pop and heavy metal. The three-part harmonies are not belted out on stage, but in a bar.

Andrea Stokes, a co-organizer of the 613 Casual Choir with musical director Pam Kapoor, said she wanted a choir venue "where you can grab a beer and get some snacks."

When Choir!Choir!Choir!, a similar setup in Toronto, recently made national headlines, Stokes said she immediately went on Facebook to organize Ottawa's own glee club. It was initially planned for Raw Sugar Café, but when the Facebook invite list reached more than 300 people, she had to move it to the Clocktower Brew Pub.

Why are so many people keen to sing pop songs in a group? It's a chance to socialize, let out a little stress via song and it only costs two bucks. Plus, the Choir!Choir!Choir! renditions of Daft Punk's Get Lucky and Leonard Cohen's Hallelujah just look flat-out fun.

"We're sort of born with this uncensored desire to sing as children," Stokes said. "It's very comforting. It's a very beautiful experience to sing with other people."

The first 613 Casual Choir gathering will take place at the Clocktower Brew Pub at 418 Richmond Rd. in Westboro on Feb. 3 at 7 p.m. The group will be singing a slowed-down version of Rihanna's Umbrella. All singing abilities are welcome.

There's a similar choir meeting at Rainbow Bistro on the last Wednesday of every month. Capital City Community Choir had its first 50-person gathering last Wednesday. For more information, check out the Capital City Choir Facebook page.

LUCY SCHOLEY/METRO

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Anti-Putin protesters ask for release of jailed activists

'Hostages of Putin.'
Protesters march Sunday with portraits of the prisoners and banners demanding their freedom

Several thousand protesters marched through central Moscow on Sunday to call for the release of 20 people who were arrested after clashes between police and demonstrators in May 2012.

Some of them face up to 10 years in prison if convicted for the protest, held on Bolotnaya Square on the eve of President Vladimir Putin's inauguration to a third term as Russia's president.

Putin's return to the presidency saw the passing of new laws aimed at cracking down on anti-government protests and restricting non-governmental organizations.

The protesters marched Sunday with portraits of the jailed protesters and a banner stretching across the street reading: "Freedom to the Bolotnaya heroes, the hostages of Putin."

Some also carried Ukrainian flags to show their support for the anti-government protesters in neighbouring Ukraine, where demonstrations have been going on for more than two months.

Of the 28 people rounded up in the Bolotnaya case, eight were recently freed on amnesty. Several defendants have been under house arrest, but most of the others have been in jail for more than a year and a half.

Only three of the cases have been decided: Two defendants received light sentences after co-operating with investigators and a third was sent for forced psychiatric treatment.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Opposition demonstrators carry posters of imprisoned protesters during a rally in Moscow on Sunday. ALEXANDER ZEMLIANICHENKO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Accommodation shortage looms large in Sochi

Construction work continues outside the Gorki Plaza East hotel in Krasnaya Polyana, Russia, on Sunday. LUCA BRUNO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Construction workers ignored the blaring alarm in Gorki Plaza on Sunday, tuning out the loud hoot-hoot-hoot and automated voice that urged guests to evacuate.

That was a fire drill, a requirement ahead of building approval, but alarm bells of a more figurative kind are ringing louder and louder for the organizers of the Sochi Olympics.

It's almost impossible to pin down how many hotels will be finished ahead of the Winter Games, which officially open Friday.

Gorki Plaza was always supposed to be a hive of activity, an accommodation and transport hub for thousands of visitors to Olympic venues in the mountains above Sochi. It just wasn't supposed to be a hive of building activity this late. And that has Olympic leaders worried.

IOC President Thomas Bach was given a status update on accommodation by local organizers at an executive board meeting Sunday.

"There is a great confidence and great satisfaction with what we have seen here," Bach said. "Of course, ... always before the games, we have some issues to be addressed. We received information that this will be addressed, but in general for the athletes the stage is set for great performances, both with regards to the villages and with regards to the sports facilities."

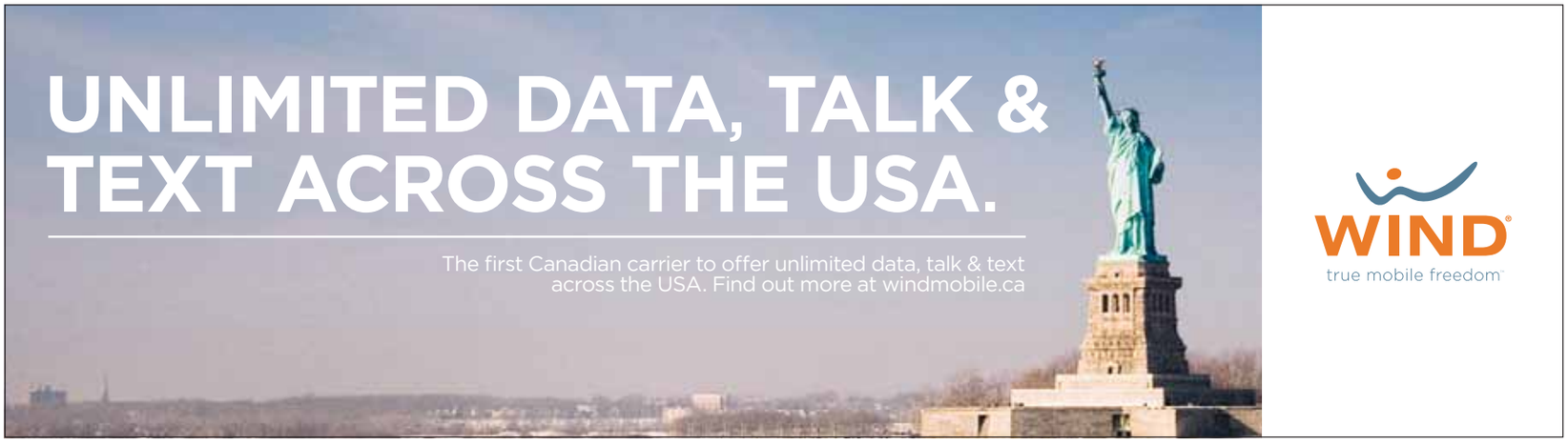
But the accommodation situation for non-athletes threatened to become a major embarrassment for organizers when some Olympic-accredited people were turned away in recent days from unfinished hotels, or checked into unfinished rooms.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hotels

Organizers estimate that thousands of media will arrive in Sochi on Monday. About 11,000 overall are expected to cover the event. Spectators are expected to flood in later in the week.

- Local organizers said Saturday only six of the nine media hotels in the mountain cluster were finished.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Industry Canada's tweets vetted in 'super-rigid process': Insider

#Bureaucracy. Tweets sanitized through 12-step protocol, retweets planned days in advance

Pity the poor government tweet, nearly strangled in its cradle before limping into the Twitterverse.

Newly disclosed documents from Industry Canada show how teams of bureaucrats often work for weeks to sanitize each lowly tweet, in a medium that's supposed to thrive on spontaneity and informality.

Most 140-character tweets issued by the department are planned weeks in advance; edited by dozens of public servants; reviewed and revised by the minister's staff; and sanitized through a 12-step protocol, the documents indicate.

Insiders and experts say the result is about as far from the spirit of Twitter as you can get, and from a department that's supposed to be on the leading edge of new communications technologies.

The documents, obtained through the Access to Information Act, show such a high level of control that arrangements are made days in advance to have other government agencies retweet forthcoming Industry Canada tweets, because retweets are considered a key measure of success.

In turn, Industry Canada agrees to do the same for tweets from the Business Development Bank of Canada and others.

Quoted

"You're imposing structure on a form of communication that inherently rejects structure."

Anonymous Industry Canada insider, on the department's strict Twitter protocol.

Formal policy for the department was set into a protocol last October, with a 12-step process that requires numerous approvals for each tweet from Industry Minister James Moore's office or from the office of Greg Rickford, the junior minister.

Public servants vet draft tweets for hashtags, syntax, policy compliance, retweeting, French translation and other factors. Policy generally precludes tweeting on weekends, and the minister's personal Twitter handle must be kept out of departmental tweets, though his name and title are often included.

The resulting tweets read like stiff public service announcements.

An insider at Industry Canada said the "super-rigid process" is frustrating, and simply doesn't work for Twitter.

"We don't really know what we're supposed to be on Twitter," he said in an interview, on condition of anonymity to protect his job.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Groundhogs split on whether our weather will get better

Wiarton Mayor John Close, right, laughs after listening to Wiarton Willie's weather prediction on Sunday. Canada's major prognosticating rodents provided a split decision on whether the country is in for an early spring or six more weeks of winter. Ontario's Wiarton Willie emerged from his cosy den Sunday morning and immediately spotted his shadow, which according to groundhog folklore means Canadians can expect six more weeks of what has already been a long, cold, snowy winter. Nova Scotia's Shubenacadie Sam was the first groundhog out, delivering a promising forecast for winter weary Canucks after he did not see his shadow, signalling an early spring. FRANK GUNN/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Middle East tour. PM's trip positive for one third of Canadians: Poll

Almost half of Canadians followed Prime Minister Stephen Harper's recent trip to the Middle East, and a third said they had positive views of his inaugural visit to the region, a new poll has found.

The survey, conducted from Jan. 23 to Jan. 27 by Harris/Decima for The Canadian Press, suggests a third of Canadians held a favourable impression of Harper's first foray to the Middle East.

Twenty-six per cent, meantime, said they held an unfavourable view. The majority of those polled, however (42 per cent) said they had no opinion.

The survey also suggested a clear majority of Canadians feel it's important for prime ministers to make international trips like Harper made last month to Israel, the West Bank and Jordan.

Fifty-nine per cent of those polled believe Harper's visit will have a positive impact on Canada's ties with Israel. But respondents were divided evenly on what the trip would mean for Canada's relationship with the Palestinian Authority: 32 per cent expect a positive impact, while 31 per cent anticipated a negative one.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper speaks at Israel's Parliament in Jerusalem, Jan. 20. ARIEL SCHALIT/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Survey. U.S. abortion rate at lowest level since 1973

The U.S. abortion rate declined to its lowest level since 1973, and the number of abortions fell by 13 per cent between 2008 and 2011, according to the latest national survey of abortion providers conducted by a prominent research institute.

The Guttmacher Institute, which supports legal access to abortion, said in a report being issued Monday that there were about 1.06 million abortions in 2011 — down from about 1.2 million in 2008. Guttmacher's figures are of interest on both sides of the abortion debate because they are more up-to-date and in some ways more comprehensive than abortion statistics compiled by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PM's next trek

Mexico may not be so welcoming

He felt the love in Israel, but when Prime Minister Stephen Harper arrives in Mexico later this month, he'll be met by an undercurrent of resentment from a continental neighbour that feels spurned by Canada.

That resentment towards Canada runs deeper than their disagreement over a travel visa that the Harper government imposed on travellers from Mexico in 2009.

It extends to lingering dissatisfaction over the lack of progress to move the economic relationship beyond the North American Free Trade Agreement.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Forbes' 30 under 30

Ex-investment banker makes splash in music biz

A 26-year-old Toronto entrepreneur, who quit his investment banking job to pursue his dreams, has made Forbes magazine's "30 under 30" list for music, alongside industry heavyweights like Drake and Lady Gaga.

Derrick Fung is the mind behind Tunezy, a website that allows fans to pay for unique music experiences, including backstage passes, meet and greets with their favourite artists or private online chats.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Ukrainian president returning to work

Ongoing unrest. Viktor Yanukovych's office announced end of sick leave opposition leaders found suspicious

The Ukraine's president will return Monday from a short sick leave that had sparked a guessing game that he was taking himself out of action in preparation to step down or for a crackdown on anti-government protests.

Viktor Yanukovych's office made the announcement about the president's return the same day as protesters seeking his resignation held one of their largest gatherings in recent weeks. About 20,000 people assembled at the main protest site in Kyiv's central square on Sunday.

Yanukovych's sick leave was announced Thursday, with his office saying he had an acute respiratory illness. Some opposition leaders were skeptical, however, and thought Yanukovych was disappearing in preparation for imposing a state of emergency. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

'With the help of the world'

"The crisis will end at last when ... we will hold new elections that will stop the regime of Yanukovych."
Protest leader Vitali Klitschko

An opposition supporter asked his girlfriend to marry him at the protesters' barricades in central Kyiv, Sunday. EFREM LUKATSKY/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sibut. Rebels flee key Central African Republic town; looting ensues

Heavily armed rebels fled a key town not far from Central African Republic's capital as French and African peacekeepers deployed on Sunday, witnesses said, though a rebel commander warned they were likely to return.

Civilians immediately began looting the property of Muslim residents of the town, witnesses said.

Members of the mostly Muslim Seleka coalition, accused of committing widespread atrocities since ousting the president of a decade in March last year, had in recent days gathered in the town of Sibut, 180 kilometres north of Bangui.

Some feared the rebels were preparing to overthrow a transitional government appointed last month.

But as heavy rain fell early Sunday, the 200 or so rebels split up and fled, with one convoy of vehicles heading north and another to the east, said Sibut resident Eugene Sangami.

"These elements benefited from the heavy rain to organize their retreat," Sangami said. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A refugee holds a mattress on the top of a plane in the airport camp in Bangui, Central African Republic, Sunday. HIPPOLYTE MARBOUA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Thailand elections

Poll closures affected 18 per cent of voters

Thailand held nationwide elections without bloodshed Sunday despite widespread fears of violence. But the country's bitter political crisis is far from over, and one of the next flash points is likely an effort to nullify the vote. Protesters forced thousands of polling booths to close in Bangkok and the south. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Costa Concordia

Diver dies while salvage work goes on

A diver died Saturday while working on the shipwrecked Costa Concordia, apparently after gashing his leg on an underwater metal sheet while preparing the wreck for removal. Italy's civil protection agency, which is overseeing the removal of the Concordia, said the diver hailed from Spain. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Award-winning actor Philip Seymour Hoffman dead at 46

Family 'devastated.'
Prolific character actor discovered in his apartment after an apparent heroin overdose

Tragic loss

"One of the greatest actors of a generation and a sweet, funny & humble man."

Ricky Gervais, tweeting about Philip Seymour Hoffman, who died Sunday of an apparent overdose.

Philip Seymour Hoffman in 2006, after winning an Oscar for his work in Capote. Hoffman was found dead Sunday in his apartment. KEVORK DJANSEZIAN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Philip Seymour Hoffman, who won a best-actor Oscar in 2006 for his portrayal of writer Truman Capote and created a gallery of other vivid characters, was found dead Sunday in his apartment with what officials said was a needle in his arm. He was 46.

Two law enforcement officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the actor apparently died of a drug overdose. Envelopes containing what was believed to be heroin were found with him, they said.

Hoffman made his career mostly as a character actor, and was one of the most prolific in the business, plying his craft with a naturalism that made him one of the most admired performers of his generation.

The stage-trained actor was nominated for Academy Awards four times in all: for Capote, The Master, Doubt and Charlie Wilson's War. He also received three Tony nominations for his work on Broadway.

Hoffman spoke candidly over the years about past struggles with drug addiction. After 23 years sober, he admitted in interviews last year to falling off the wagon and developing a heroin problem that led to a stint in rehab.

Tributes poured in from other Hollywood figures.

Kevin Costner said in an interview, "Philip was a very important actor and really takes his place among the real great actors. It's a shame. Who knows what he would have been able to do? But we're left with the legacy of the work he's done and it all speaks for itself."

"No words for this. He was too great and we're too shattered," said Mike Nichols, who directed Hoffman in Charlie Wilson's War and in Death of a Salesman on Broadway.

Hoffman's family called the news "tragic and sudden." Hoffman is survived by his partner of 15 years, Mimi O'Donnell, and their three children.

"We are devastated by the loss of our beloved Phil and appreciate the outpouring of love and support we have received from everyone," the family said in a statement.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Allen: Farrow's claims 'untrue and disgraceful'

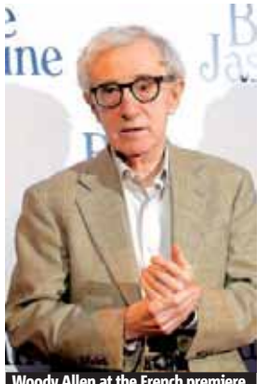
A representative for Woody Allen says the director calls Dylan Farrow's allegations of child molestation "untrue and disgraceful."

Publicist Leslee Dart said in an email Sunday that Allen has read Farrow's open letter, published online by The New York Times, claiming she was sexually assaulted as a seven-year-old by her then adoptive father. Dart also said Allen will be responding soon.

Farrow claimed that in 1992 at the family's Connecticut home, Allen led her to a "dim, closet-like attic" and "then he sexually assaulted me." Farrow didn't specify Allen's actions, but described other abusive behaviour.

The 1992 allegation came shortly after Allen became involved with Mia Farrow's adopted daughter, Soon-Yi Previn. Allen, then in his mid-50s, was not the adoptive father of Previn, who was about 19 at the time. The two married in 1997 and have two adopted daughters.

Connecticut prosecutors investigated the allegations in 1993 but did not charge Allen. The 78-year-old director has long maintained his innocence.



Woody Allen at the French premiere of Blue Jasmine in Paris last summer. CHRISTOPHE ENA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

In the open letter, Farrow recalled several events from her childhood. In a letter to op-ed columnist Nicholas Kristof, she said she was moved to speak out because of Hollywood's continued embrace of Allen.

"That he got away with what he did to me haunted me as I grew up," Farrow wrote. "I was stricken with guilt that I had allowed him to be near other little girls."

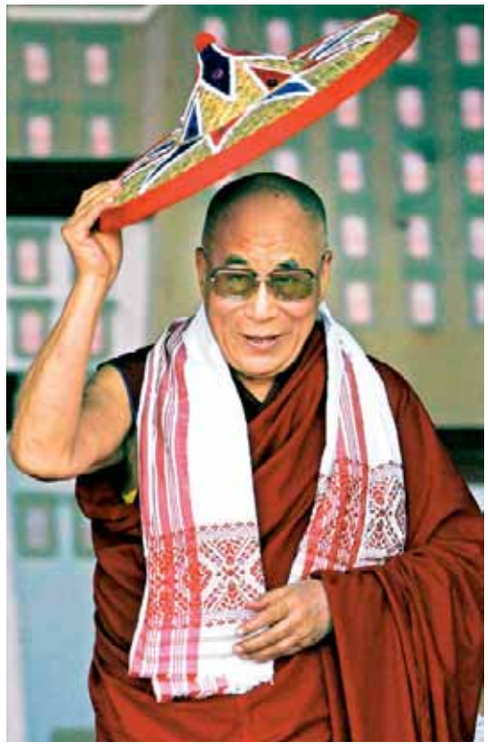
Farrow said Allen would have her get in bed with him and at other times "place his head in my naked lap and breathe in and breathe out."

"For as long as I could remember, my father had been doing things to me that I didn't like," Farrow said. "These things happened so often, so routinely, so skillfully hidden from a mother that would have protected me had she known, that I thought it was normal."

A rebuke followed last week when Robert Weide, director of a PBS documentary on Allen, argued in a lengthy account on the Daily Beast that many were unaware of the facts of Allen's relationship with Previn and that the incident with Farrow was unproven.

Farrow, who said she now lives happily married in Florida under another name, urged people not to forget her side of the story and lamented "a world that celebrates her tormenter."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Hello Dalai! Tibet fest begins

Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama holds a traditional Assamese hat that was presented to him by Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi during the Festival of Tibet in Gauhati, India, Sunday. The Dalai Lama inaugurated the five-day festival.

ANUPAM NATH/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Egypt

Al-Jazeera cameraman acquitted

A Cairo court says it has acquitted a cameraman for the Qatar-based network Al-Jazeera, after he was held for months on charges of committing acts of violence.

Mohamed Badr, who worked for Al-Jazeera's channel in Egypt, was arrested following clashes in July. Egypt's semi-official media said Sunday he was acquitted along with 61 others.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sweden

Man detained after attempt to enter cockpit

Police at a Stockholm airport have detained a man who tried to enter the cockpit on a flight from Dubai to Stockholm. A police spokesman says crew handcuffed the man during the flight Sunday and handed him over to police when the plane landed. Police detained him on suspicion of preparing aircraft sabotage.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Harsh terrorism law unveiled in Saudi Arabia

Human rights activists concerned. Any act that 'undermines' state, or calls for regime change, can be tried as terrorism

Saudi Arabia put into effect a sweeping new counterterrorism law Sunday that human rights activists say allows the kingdom to prosecute as a terrorist anyone who demands reform, exposes corruption or otherwise engages in dissent.

The law states that any act that "undermines" the state or society, including calls for regime change in Saudi Arabia, can be tried as an act of terrorism. It also grants security services broad powers to raid homes and track phone calls and Internet activity.

Human rights activists were alarmed by the law and said it is clearly aimed at keeping the kingdom's ruling Al Saud family firmly in control amid the demands for democratic reform that have grown louder since the Arab Spring protests that shook the region.

Human Rights Watch researcher Adam Coogle warned, "The new law is draconian in spirit and letter, and there is every reason to fear that the authorities will … use it against peaceful dissidents."

The measure was approved by the Cabinet on Dec. 16 and ratified by King Abdullah. It was published in its entirety for the first time on Friday in the government's official gazette Um Al-Qura. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Absolute monarchy

The measure was approved by the Cabinet in December and ratified by King Abdullah.

- Saudi Arabia is one of the world's last absolute monarchies. All decisions are centred in the hands of 89-year-old King Abdullah. There is no parliament.

Serbian winds cause snowdrifts, block trains

Vehicles are seen stuck in snowdrifts on the road near Backa Topola, Serbia, on Sunday. Snowdrifts, formed by stormy winds, have blocked two passenger trains and dozens of vehicles in northern Serbia, leading authorities to close down several roads and a border crossing with Hungary. DARKO DOZET/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kenya

Police arrest radical Muslim youths at mosque

Police opened fire on Muslim youths wielding daggers at a mosque linked to recruiting Islamic extremists, and at least one officer and a young man were killed Sunday, witnesses and officials said in the coastal resort and port city of Mombasa.

Police said they raided the Masjid Musa mosque acting on intelligence that a meeting to recruit militants was going on.

A reporter at the scene saw police shoot and kill one person as they tried to disperse a growing crowd screaming "Allahu akbar" or "God is great" outside the mosque, which has been the recent site of violent confrontations between young Muslims and police. A police officer who was stabbed in the face died of his wounds, said Mombasa police commander Robert Kitur. Another officer was stabbed in the stomach and was being treated. Police later occupied the mosque. "We have arrested dozens of youths who attacked our officers," Kitur said. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Lottery News
Winter 2013/2014
EARLY BIRD DEADLINE
MIDNIGHT TOMORROW!
EARLY BIRD PRIZE
$300,000
DEADLINE
FEBRUARY 4
What's your $300,000 spending spree?
BUY EARLY WIN BIG
WAKE UP A WINNER!
TOP PRIZE
$2 MILLION
IT'S LIKE $100,000 A YEAR FOR 20 YEARS!
Best Odds 1 in 3 EVER
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9 CASH, CAR & TRIP GRAND PRIZES!
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Bylls.com. Pay some bills with Bitcoin ... for a fee

People across Canada are now using an online form of currency to participate in the most everyday activities.

The website Bylls.com launched two weeks ago out of the Bitcoin Embassy in Montreal's accelerator program, aiming at allowing users with Bitcoin in their digital wallets to pay everything, from cellphone to household bills.

Eric Spano, CEO of Bylls, says his startup has an agreement with a third-party payment processor, which gives access to a database of 4,000 different organizations.

"Since most companies don't accept Bitcoin right now, what we do is we settle the bills through the payment process in Canadian dollars," said Spano. "The companies are receiving Canadian dollars, but the consumers can pay in Bitcoin."

While the exchange rates for Bitcoin are extremely volatile, Spano said his venture is able to turn a profit with small service fees that vary depending on the size of the transaction.

A Saskatchewan telecom initially seemed open to accepting Bitcoin.

Bylls is the first platform of its kind in Canada, he added.

One early adopter from Saskatchewan, Jeffrey Cliff, sent a Tweet to SaskTel letting them know how he paid his bill with Bitcoin.

"The more ways our customers have to pay their bill, the better," the @SaskTelSupport account responded in a now-deleted Tweet.

But, Michelle Englo, the director of external communications for SaskTel, said the conversation was a misunderstanding, as the Crown corporation has no plans to start accepting bitcoins directly any time soon.

JACOB MORGAN/METRO IN SASKATOON

Budget. NDP push to cap ATM fees at 50 cents

The NDP is renewing its mission to cap ATM fees.

A motion calling for the cap was set to be debated in the House of Commons Monday. It urges the Conservative government to take action on ATM fees in its upcoming federal budget.

Glenn Thibeault, the NDP's consumer affairs critic, says Canadians shouldn't have to pay two or three dollars to withdraw their own money from bank machines, particularly when it costs banks as little as 36 cents to complete the transaction.

The NDP proposal would cap ATM withdrawal fees at 50 cents per transaction.

During question period in the House of Commons recently, NDP Leader Tom Mulcair asked Prime Minister Stephen Harper whether the budget, to be tabled Feb. 11, will tackle the issue of ATM fees.

Harper responded by saying that his government has raised concerns about "certain banking fees and practices on consumers and small business." But he didn't say whether the budget would address ATM fees. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Cost to banks

36¢

Glenn Thibeault, the NDP's consumer affairs critic, says it costs banks as little as 36 cents when customers withdraw their own money from bank machines.

Hacker group

'Nullcrew' takes credit for hacking of Bell customers

Bell Canada says 22,400 of its small business customers have had their account information compromised by hackers. A hacking group calling itself Nullcrew is claiming credit for the attack. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Under investigation

Marriott hotel customers hit by hacking: Blogger

A major hotel chain is investigating a reported breach of customer information. An e-security blogger says the breach involved credit and debit card information of Marriott hotels guests. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The road to MacKay River is paved with sticky dirt

The untreated dusty road at MacKay River in Alberta is shown in this undated handout photo. When Suncor, Canada's largest energy company, realized that its dust-control strategy — i.e., spraying water onto the road from a truck — was an act of futility, it enlisted the help of General Electric to get the problem under control. By using a glue of sorts, consisting of a byproduct of pulp and paper manufacturing, GE's method binds the particles together so that the dirt stays put. SUNCOR/GE/HANDOUT/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Bet on a 70 cent loonie at own risk

HOW TO ROLL
Alison Griffiths
metronews.ca

The plunging loonie could fall further, say an increasing number of currency watchers. This creates a dilemma for investors. Is it time to hedge or not?

Hedging neutralizes currency fluctuations. It has been very popular with mutual funds and exchange-traded-fund (ETF) providers since the Canadian dollar was a sad-sack 62 cents against the U.S. dollar in 2002.

With our dollar at a historic low, it made sense back then to buy hedged investments because the value of U.S.-dollar investments translated back into Canadian currency would diminish as the loonie rose.

But as the loonie hit $1.10 in 2007, the reverse was true. It made sense to avoid hedged mutual funds and ETFs. No one expected the Canadian dollar to remain that elevated so any decline would make a U.S.-dollar investment worth correspondingly more.

Now things are a bit tricky. The dollar is neither high nor low, but it is approaching an often-stated "fair value" mark of 85 cents against the greenback. Some predictions, notably that of San Francisco hedge-fund manager Vijai Mohan, a long-time Canadian-dollar bear, have it crashing all the way down to 70 cents.

If you believe the loonie bears, then avoid hedged mutual funds and ETFs because U.S.-dollar investments will benefit as our currency sinks.

On the other hand, those who think the loonie will hover or rise, should consider hedged mutual funds or ETFs.

Anyone planning to sell U.S. dollar investments for retirement income or to make a purchase, including withdrawing funds from an RRSP through the Home Buyers' or Lifelong Learning plan, should tread carefully.

A free-falling loonie puts money in your pocket. However, the opposite can also happen. If money is needed in the short term, it's probably better to sell now, rather than betting on a continued downward swing.

Diving down

The Canadian dollar lost 6.6 per cent against the U.S. in 2013, the biggest decline since 2008.

- When investors believe the sky is falling elsewhere in the world, as is happening right now in emerging markets, they run to the safe haven of the U.S. dollar.
- Also, lower prices or lower expectations for oil, gold and other commodities tend to depress the loonie.

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You add CGA to your name. That's because you want something that will help you move forward in a forward-thinking company that promotes forward-thinking people. Having already heard of success stories like Greg Twinney, CGA, and how the three letters at the end of his name helped him become a founding partner and the CFO at Kobo Inc., the global digital eReading success story, you choose the CGA designation. You're ready to take the first steps to making the next big step in your career.

From CGA to YYZ to AKL. And once you add those three letters to your name, it opens up a new world of possibilities. Literally. The opportunities you've never heard of, in places you've never been to, materialize into job offers. After all, CGAs can work in any industry, anywhere in the world. Now you're ready to follow in the footsteps of other CGAs who work in places like the United States, the United Kingdom and even New Zealand (the lush land of rolling hills, hobbits and Brett Dailey, CGA, who works at the University of Otago). With CGA at the end of your name, you're always in demand.

Three letters at the end of your name have a way of making you more memorable. You're on the verge of accepting a position overseas when your phone rings. It's your boss. She has noticed the value you've added as you've progressed through the CGA program and is offering you more money and more responsibility as a result. Because adding CGA to the end of your name proves you're ready for both. So what will you do next? That's up to you. As a CGA, you know you've got more options. And more is always better than less. **CGA. Do More.**

Luckily, moving up in your career doesn't mean moving into your friend's garage. CGA Ontario's flexible online learning program allows you to continue to earn while you learn. And yes, your friend is kind enough to offer his aluminum shed to be your home while you're studying, but no, you don't take it. Because as a CGA you're going places. And that shed isn't one of them.

More letters at the end of your name lead to more numbers on your paycheque. CGAs are among the top 5% of income earners in Canada. And when those job opportunities come in, they offer more money than you've ever earned before. You might say yes, but you have the freedom to say no.

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Enrol by March 4 and start studying in the spring.

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ALERT THE MEDIA: MAYORS TALKING

URBAN COMPASS

Steve Collins
ottawa@metronews.ca

Is it really that far across the Ottawa River? Gatineau Mayor Maxime Pedneaud-Jobin crossed it last week for his first formal meeting with his Ottawa counterpart Mayor Jim Watson, and they held a joint press conference to let us know.

As the mayors pointed out, they have a lot to talk about. But this is a chat between neighbours, not international diplomacy. It shouldn't be an occasion when these two mayors meet; it should be business as usual.

The week before the meeting, Watson pointed out that the next phase of the Ottawa River Action plan, one of the city's two top capital priorities, will not only require $60 million each from the province and the feds, but co-operation from Gatineau: "Pollution doesn't respect the boundaries of the Ottawa River, so if we're doing all of our work on this side, we have to make sure that pollutants on the Gatineau side are also going to be taken care of. I don't know, to be honest, the state of pollutants on their side compared to ours, so that will be the dialogue we start with the mayor."

So, dialogue started. Good.

The other top priority is Phase 2 of light rail, an ambitious expansion of rail to the south, east and west — but not across the river to the north, so we'll continue for the foreseeable future to send 300 buses full of commuters over the bridges every day.

The mayors, unsurprisingly, didn't emerge from their confab with instant solutions for all these issues, but they had one plan for spending more time together: They've asked the federal government to appoint them to the board of Watson's longtime bête noir, the National Capital Commission.

"Imagine an unelected, unaccountable body standing in the way of a major transportation improvement in Montreal or Windsor or Calgary," Watson said, complaining of the NCC's "micromanagement" on files like LRT. "And imagine that unelected, unaccountable body making or impeding local decisions and being made of a majority of members from outside the region. That's exactly what we have with the NCC in Ottawa-Gatineau."

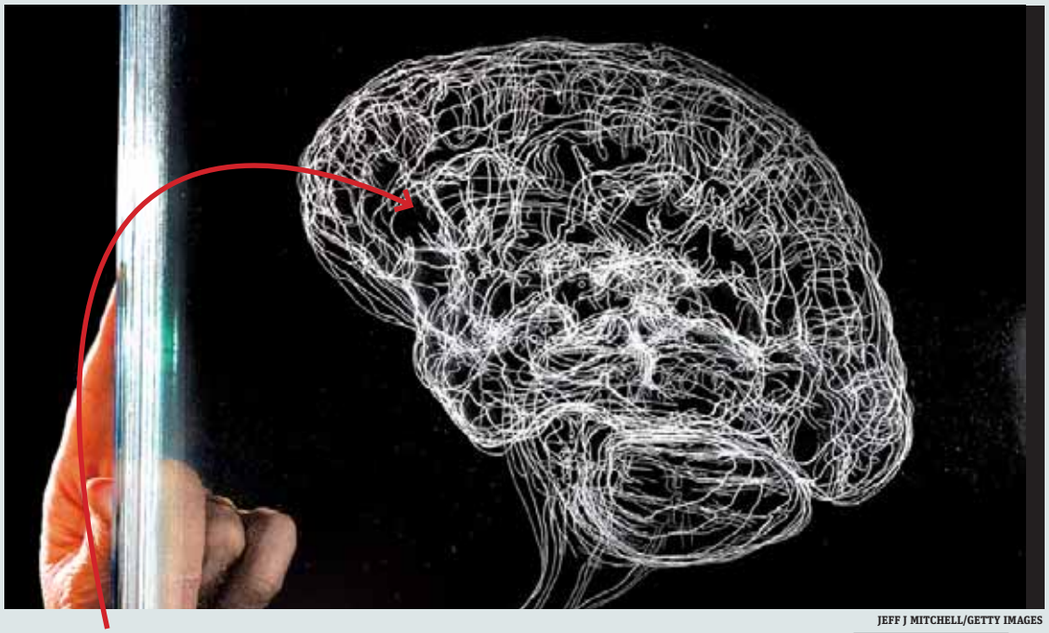
It's a familiar theme from Watson, who twinned the words "unelected" and "unaccountable" repeatedly into a bit of a mantra — one that obscures the spotty accountability we often get from our elected officials. If it hadn't been for the unelected, unaccountable NCC, a lot of the city's greenbelt, left to elected councillors accountable to their corporate campaign donors, would probably have been churned up for development decades ago.

And yet it's hard to ignore his point that local appointees are a minority on the board and the mayors are outside looking in on board decisions that crucially affect their cities.

Neither Minister John Baird nor the NCC seems particularly receptive to the mayors' proposal, and it may be a slow start that Jim and Maxime simply agree on the democratic deficiencies of a third party, but it's a start nonetheless. We should hear more from them.

ZOOM

Portrait of the artist as a brain



JEFF J MITCHELL/GETTY IMAGES

A new frame of mind

Artist Angela Palmer has mapped her own brain. Palmer's work, Brain of the Artist, which goes on display to the public for the first time this week at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh, was created from digital information provided by medical scanners. METRO

Artist's viewpoint

"It is an extraordinary experience, staring at your brain floating in a glass chamber before you. Unlike traditional portraiture, an image of one's brain does not depict anything recognizably "you" and yet it could not be more intensely personal."

"Being scanned felt like a mechanical fortune teller passing over your body," artist Angela Palmer said. GETTY IMAGES

Sculpture exposes 'inner architecture'

"Recreating the brain is perhaps the most objective form of self-portraiture," Palmer describes. "I try to peel back the layers to expose the hidden beauty of our inner architecture. The image floats ethereally in its glass chamber, but can only be viewed from certain angles. From above and from the side the image vanishes and the viewer sees only a void." METRO

Clickbait

LUKE SIMCOE
Metro Online

Last week, the beloved famous Internet cat Colonel Meow passed away, leaving us with a fluffy, Himalayan cat-sized hole in our collective hearts. But now that we're done grieving, Metro takes a look at some other Internet-famous felines who can help fill that void.

FACEBOOK.COM

Lil Bub (lilbub.com):
Known for her perma-kitten appearance, Lil Bub is a dwarf cat with a lolling tongue and a big heart. She's spawned a merchandise empire, and boasts an impressive array of social media followers. She even has her own talk show.

Nala Cat (nalacat.com):
Quite possibly the only cat with over one million Instagram followers, Nala is a Siamese-tabby mix known for her blue eyes and love of bow ties.

Maru (youtube.com/user/mugumogu):
One of the first cats to garner online fame, Maru is a Scottish fold from Japan whose fascination with boxes has been delighting YouTube users for years.

Twitter

Canadian groundhogs like Wiarton Willie and Shubenacadie Sam are offering conflicting predictions on how much longer Old Man Winter will be sticking around, while world-famous Punxsutawney Phil says it won't be leaving quite yet. How will you be spending the next six weeks?

@KatarinaKaneff: praying that both of those silly groundhogs are smote for their horrible predictions, and that spring comes early.

@LindaMcCallumRE
Hunting Groundhogs

Follow @metropicks and take part in our daily poll. Best answers published right here.

Comments

RE: "Be Wary of Groundhog Predictions: Forecasters" published online Friday, Jan. 31, 2014

The "forecasters" bad mouth the ground hogs because the hogs have a higher forecast accuracy percentage than they do!!
Stoneaxem, posted to metronews.ca

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU:
Send us your comments: ottawaletters@metronews.ca

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E-books

Cinefex

By Don Shay & Jody Duncan

iPad

MIND THE APP
Kris Abel
@RealKrisAbel
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A journal of behind-the-scenes movie magic, folks at Cinefex magazine get their hands on the extras you won't find on any DVD and the photos obsessive fans drool over. Going digital has actually lowered its price from $15 to $5 while adding how-they-did-it videos and interactive galleries. The current issue is a fascinating reveal of what kept Sandra Bullock afloat in Gravity.

Box office

Ride Along still cruising on top

Ride Along has topped the box office for the third week in a row with $12.3 million US, according to Sunday's studio estimates. Disney's Frozen, now the fourth highest-grossing domestic animated release ever, is in second place with $9.3 million US. That Awkward Moment, a Focus Features film, has taken third place in its opening weekend with $9 million US. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Glamour on the gridiron

Forget the football!
Bruno Mars, Chili Peppers and Queen Latifah the real stars of the Super Bowl

Bruno Mars and Anthony Kiedis wow the crowd at the Super Bowl on Sunday. ALL PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

Bruno Mars brought millions of fans into the club with a command performance during the Super Bowl halftime show Sunday.

The Grammy Award-winning singer translated his high-energy live show to the largest of stages, carrying off his hits with a smoking hot live band while managing to seamlessly integrate the Red Hot Chili Peppers into the set.

There was some concern Mars might not be able to hold up to the pressure of the assignment, but the 28-year-old wiped away the questions immediately.

Dressed in a gold-coloured jacket, he executed a note-perfect drum solo as he rode across the field on a raised platform. Once on stage, he delivered hits like Locked Out of Heaven and Treasure with a machismo that made it clear he wasn't lip-syncing.

Earlier in the evening, rapper and singer Queen Latifah and the opera star Renée Fleming proved the perfect choices to sing America the Beautiful and The Star-Spangled Banner. Both women are accomplished performers and handled the pitfall-ridden material with relative ease in stirring performances that brought cheers from the crowd.

"Have you ever heard it sung any better?," play-by-play announcer Joe Buck said as fans cheered wildly after Fleming's two-minute rendition of the national anthem.

Her performance included the Armed Forces Chorus, video shots of soldiers in Afghanistan, fireworks, a giant American flag and several shots of Denver Broncos quarterback Peyton Manning scowling, already in game-face mode.

Fans cheered wildly after the soprano, dressed in a Vera Wang-designed black gown with white sash, hit a long final high note with practised ease.

Latifah, dressed sedately in a knee-length blue parka and a white turtleneck, shared her performance equally with the New Jersey Youth Chorus, often swirling her voice together with the singers rather than taking a more forceful lead role. The effect was lovely.

She finished her performance with a small fist pump.

After walking off the field, Fleming said she hadn't felt nervous. "I do most of my nervous stuff in advance so when I actually get there I can enjoy it ... and it was certainly true this time," she said. "I feel so thrilled and honoured to be out there. I loved every second." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Oh, Joe!

Despite it being a balmy 8 C in East Rutherford on Sunday night, NFL legend Joe Namath symbolically flipped the bird at PETA and donned a fur coat for his role as pre-game coin tosser. The cloak was ostensibly an homage to his style during his days as the New York Jets' star quarterback in the 1960s, when he'd think nothing of throwing on some animal skins to keep warm on the sidelines.

Rob Ford the answer to Canada's literary woes

Satirical American-Russian author Gary Shteyngart says he's sorry for saying some Canadian authors take fewer risks because they are beholden to government grants.

But he still stands by his words, which he recently made to an online publication, and he thinks the problem will eventually change, thanks to embattled Toronto mayor Rob Ford.

"I think Rob Ford will give Canada licence to do something else," Shteyngart said in an interview to promote his new immigrant memoir, Little Failure.

"Because now literature — the idea of this sort of perfect country, which is how many people see it, where everything just hums along smoothly and people are polite — you've got Rob Ford and that raises the bar, and I think literature has to meet that bar in some way.

"Because now we know that there's a craziness underneath it all that exceeds any insanity that we have in our craziest states — in Jersey, Alabama. I mean, this is beyond crazy. This is so crazy that, as a satirist who invents countries like Absurdistan, I could have never invented this."

American-Russian author Gary Shteyngart. CONTRIBUTED

The bespectacled novelist behind Super Sad True Love Story, Absurdistan and The Russian Debutante's Handbook recently took a jab at the state of CanLit in an article on vulture.com. It was in response to a question of whether fiction should be subsidized. "Let me say this. I was the judge of a Canadian prize, and it's subsidized, they all get grants," started Shteyngart, who was on the jury for the 2012 Scotiabank Giller Prize that went to Will Ferguson's novel 419.

"Out of a million entries, we found four or five really good ones, but people just don't take the same damn risks! Maybe they want to please the Ontario Arts Council, or whatever it is."

On Friday, when asked about the comments, Shteyngart delivered a tongue-in-cheek apology.

"I'm so sorry, Canada. I'm so sorry. I love all things Canadian," said the Brooklyn-based scribe. "I got married in Nunavut, in Grise Fiord, the northernmost civilian settlement — I mean, come on. Glenn Gould, I like him quite a bit. I just had a picture taken of me sitting next to him, at that statue outside the CBC. I ate poutine last night along with some Niagara ice-wine, dessert wine. I mean, I'm giving it all for this country." THE CANADIAN PRESS

Dig through N.Y.C. rubble in Shovel Ready

New book. Author Adam Sternbergh tells the story of Spademan, a trash collector turned assassin, in post-apocalyptic New York

EMILY LAURENCE
Metro World News

What would it take for New York to return to the gritty, dangerous city it was pre-Bloomberg?

In a time when the city is only getting cleaner and more expensive, author Adam Sternbergh writes about a lawless, treacherous New York City in his novel Shovel Ready. The book is set in the near future after a bomb hits Times Square.

Those who can leave do, abandoning others with no options who must forge a new life in a deteriorating city. At the heart of the book is a former trash collector who becomes a hit man.

If you think this sounds like it would make a good movie, you aren't alone. The book was optioned by Warner Bros.

"I tried to convey the idea of what one character calls this incremental apocalypse," Sternbergh, who is the culture editor at New York Times Magazine, tells us. "The apocalypse stuff we see in movies and books is usually very dramatic, with aliens blowing up the Empire State building or zombies overrunning the city."

Sternbergh says he was more interested in the idea of a change taking place slowly, similarly to what happened in many major U.S. cities during the '60s and '70s. He cites Detroit as a modern-day example. "It's not as dramatic as the terrorist element in the book, but Detroit is completely unrecognizable now (compared to what) it was 50 years ago," he says.

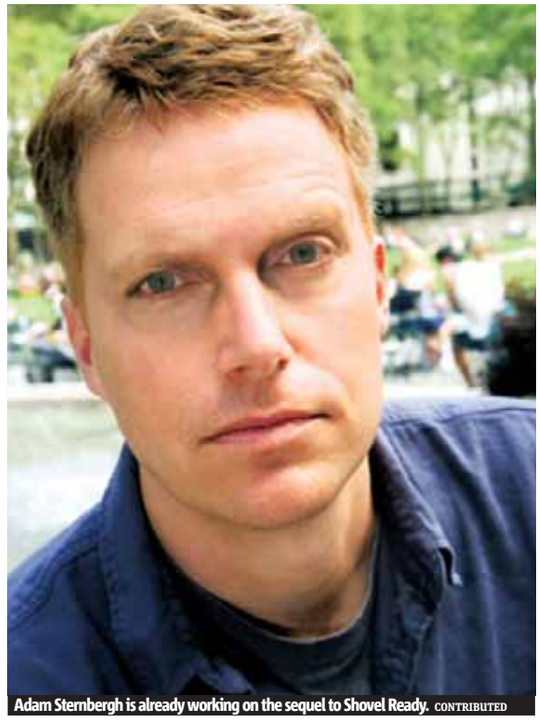
Spademan, the trash collector-turned-assassin, gives the book a dark undertone, and he's painted as a classic antihero. But besides the whole killing-people part of his personality, you just might be able to relate to Spademan's cranky and familiar demeanor. "The thing I've always liked about hard boiled tales is that they are always exaggerated metaphors for real life," says Sternbergh.

Shovel Ready also explores our relationship with technology. Wealthy city residents who choose not to leave, cocoon themselves in a virtual reality where all their fantasies can become real. When developing this idea for the novel, Sternbergh says it stemmed from the virtual age we live in now.

"There was something very familiar about the idea of getting lost in real life and the way in which having that technological outlet can sometimes cause us to ignore what's happening around us," he explains.

As someone who has been living in and reporting on New York for the past 10 years, Sternbergh says he certainly doesn't hope the city will descend into what is portrayed in the book, but he hopes it doesn't go too far in the other direction either.

Sternbergh says he fears that in a decade, New York City will feel museum-like, as Paris does, a beautiful city that exists for people to admire but lacking the energy and rebirth New York thrives on. "You have to imagine. In 10 years the city is going to be very different than it is now, and I hope we'll still be here to enjoy it. And that the Second Avenue subway will be open."


Adam Sternbergh is already working on the sequel to Shovel Ready. CONTRIBUTED

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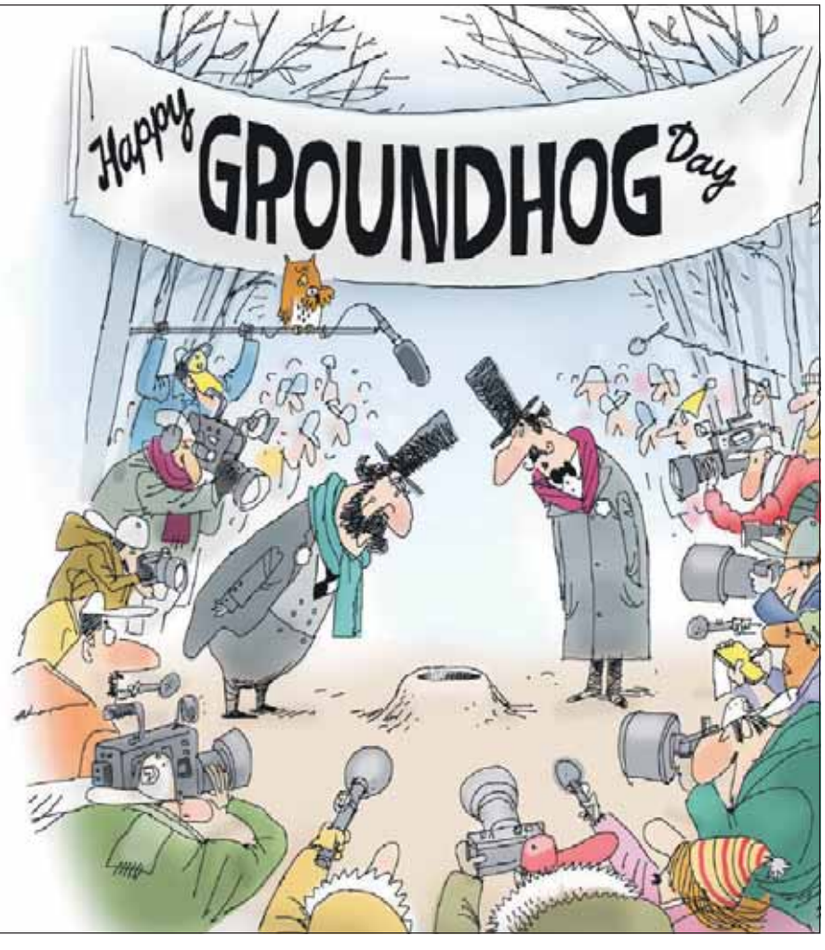
"Number one job site" based on six-month average online job postings for period ending December 31, 2013. Comparison between Workopolis and all other major paid online job boards. Does not include online classified sites or job posting aggregator sites. Statistics provided by WANTED Technologies. © 2014 Workopolis.



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J. K. Rowling ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Rowling admits not every little thing she does is magic — like Ron & Hermione

Harry Potter author J.K. Rowling is having second thoughts about having ended the series with heroine Hermione Granger paired up romantically with Ron Weasley.

The hugely successful author tells Wonderland magazine she chose the red-haired Ron for Hermione for very personal reasons.

She told the magazine she "wrote the Hermione-Ron relationship as a form of wish fulfilment" and said the couple might eventually need relationship counselling.

The soon-to-be published interview was reported in The Sunday Times, which also quoted actress Emma Watson, who played Hermione, expressing doubts about the viability of her character's relationship with Ron.

She told the newspaper that many fans doubt Ron can make Hermione happy over time.

Many fans had hoped Harry and Hermione would become a couple. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Justin Bieber

One super bowl too many? Biebs held before big game as jet searched for pot

Justin Bieber just can't catch a break. The beleaguered singer arrived at New Jersey's Teterboro airport for the Super Bowl in a private jet that reportedly reeked of marijuana, prompting authorities to place him in federal custody for hours while the aircraft was searched, according to Page Six. Bieber was travelling with his father, Jeremy, and about 10 other friends. While drug-sniffing dogs reportedly identified two pieces of luggage as containing marijuana, nothing was found and Bieber and his entourage were allowed to leave. Sources say the jet's pilot may have tipped off police about pot smoking on board before landing.

METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

Pop goes the week

Jackman to drop anchor in Jack Sparrow's lagoon

STARGAZING
Malene Arpe
scene@metronews.ca

Hugh Jackman will be playing Blackbeard in the upcoming Peter Pan movie. I think I speak for all of us when I say, "Captain Jack Sparrow who?"

Kate Gosselin's sister says that the two siblings haven't spoken a word to each other in six years. Then she continued skipping down the street, throwing confetti and handing out puppies.

After a year and a half Heidi Klum breaks up with her bodyguard boyfriend. But shee-eee-eee-eee-eee will always love him.

While testifying at the British phone-hacking trial, Jude Law finds out that a close relative sold private information about Jude to the News of the World. "I may have a useful tip for you," says Kate Gosselin's sister.

Rovio, the maker of Angry Birds, wants to make it completely clear they "do not collaborate with spy agencies." They will, however, admit to turning previously well-functioning adults into empty shells that can only be filled by the laughter of evil pigs and thus are completely vulnerable to oppression by the agents of totalitarian governments.

This week in What Event was Worse? The Pope's lovely peace doves getting viciously attacked by a seagull and a crow or Jamie Foxx introducing his daughter by saying, "this is my seed?"

Lorde

She is 17 going on 45: Lorde cracks wise as age conspiracy debunked

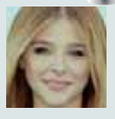
With the success that 17-year-old singer Lorde has achieved, it's easy to believe conspiracy theorists when they claim she's lying about her age. In fact, rumours to that effect reached a fever pitch after her recent Grammy victory, so website the Hairpin went ahead and published her full New Zealand birth certificate, which proves that Lorde — real name Ella Maria Lani Yelich-O'Connor — was born Nov. 7, 1996. Of course, some conspiracy theorists still aren't convinced. Lorde herself is taking it in stride, joking to Vanity Fair recently, "Hi, I'm Ella, and I'm actually 45."

Owen Wilson

It's another boy for serial baby daddy Owen Wilson

Owen Wilson is a dad once again, welcoming a baby boy with ex-girlfriend and former personal trainer Caroline Lindqvist, the actor's rep confirms to People magazine. "They are not living together, but Owen is involved (in the pregnancy)," a source said prior to the baby's birth. "He comes to doctor's appointments and makes sure Caroline is doing well." Wilson also has a three-year-old son with ex Jade Duell.

Twitter



@ChloeGMoretz
I've come to the conclusion that Sarah Jessica Parker is the best at faking surprised

@Sethrogen
I just rode my bike past a transvestite who smelled like the most delicious garlic marinara sauce.

@ElizabethHurley
Do you think the male species may be at its best between the ages of 8-13?

Why your budget was a bust from the beginning

It was a good effort but... Keep these five money-management mistakes in mind when drawing up your next dollar tracker

GAIL VAZ-OXLADE
Gail blogs daily at gailvazoxlade.com

People are always willing to volunteer their wisdom about budgets to me. I'm a budget discussion magnet, it seems. And nine times out of 10, people want to tell me why budgets don't work. I agree. Most people's budgets don't work for a few basic reasons. Here's my top five list:

Budgeting isn't just about tracking your costs, it's about making sure you're spending your hard-earned money the way you want to. ISTOCK

Inaccurate income projections
I can't believe the number of people who don't know how much money they make. How can you have a hope in hell of having a budget that works if you don't know how much money you bring home?

I know there are a variety of pay periods: monthly, semi-monthly, bi-weekly and weekly. But all you have to do is look at how much is coming into your accounts to know how much you actually make.

If it varies from one month to the next, then use the lowest income you have as your basic income, and use whatever extra you earn to fund stuff like home maintenance, vacations, gifts and the like.

Not enough categories
Most people generalize their budgets too much to get an accurate picture of where their money is going. I swear if I see one more budget with "spending money" I'll spit. It's all spending money. What are you spending it on?

You have to have enough categories in your budget to give you a real sense of where the money goes and where you may be able to cut costs. Careful now: too many categories and you'll make your budget such a chore that you'll toss it in no time at all. Another problem that goes hand in hand with this one is:

Failure to include expenses
Not all expenses come in every month. Insurance bills can come annually.

Property taxes can come quarterly. Service contracts, dental bills, birthday presents, health-club renewals… there are lots of things that pop up only once or four times a year. If you don't include them in your budget, you won't have the money at the ready when the bill comes in.

Cash
People spend cash without keeping track of where it's going and that throws their budgets out of whack. Some people use bank machines like a wallet, pulling $20 here and $40 there as needed.

Careless categorization

I swear if I see one more budget with "spending money" I'll spit. It's all spending money. What are you spending it on?
Gail Vaz-Oxlade

The problem with this approach is that money flows away without any record of where it's gone. And if you know you have a bill coming due in a couple of days, but your partner doesn't, and he goes into the account for cash, then you won't have the money available to pay the bill.

No plan to save
People seldom put a "savings" line on their budget. Despite how well known the Pay Yourself First idea is, people still don't do it.

They wait to see how much they have left to save. And it's usually ZERO, zip, zilch! If you're serious about savings, it has to be a line item on your budget. You have to identify a specific amount you're going to save both for long-term savings and for emergencies, and you need an auto-deduction to a savings account to MAKE IT HAPPEN.

Budgets are a great tool provided you use them the right way. You need to have spending categories that fit your personal situation, your spending habits, and your income.

Don't look to anyone else's completed budget as a guide, except perhaps for a list of categories you may not have thought of. Make sure you review your spending patterns to see if there are areas where you're overspending.

There may even be things you're spending money on of which you weren't even aware.

WANT TO BE SMARTER ABOUT YOUR MONEY? GO TO MYMONEYMYCHOICES.COM AND FOLLOW THE ROADMAP TO SUCCESS.

Choose organization over obliteration

Inbox overload? How to avoid declaring email bankruptcy

Whether it's steady trickle of daily emails or the hundreds of messages streaming in during your vacation, hitting the reset button on your inbox may seem like the easiest way to cope with the digital deluge.

In a recent New York Times article, columnist Nick Bilton wrote of his decision to delete all of his 46,315 unread emails, starting the new year with an empty inbox.

"I think it stems from this ability to have access to technology anywhere and anytime," said Jui Ramaprasad, assistant professor, information systems at McGill University's Desautels Faculty of Management.

"All of these companies we interact with have mobile applications or have social media handles they want you to follow them on. And you just do it one at a time and all of a sudden, it ends up with complete information overload."

Yet while declaring email bankruptcy may offer momentary respite from the flurry of messages, there's little to stem the inevitable tide of new ones filtering in.

"By purging everything, they're just going to get in this continuous loop of overwhelm, and it will never go away unless they change their approach and outlook of how they deal with email," says Ottawa-based productivity consultant Valeri Hall Little of Intandem Business Efficiency.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

You've got mail!

Rather than responding to the urge to hit delete all, experts suggest finding more efficient ways to manage the influx.

- Christina Cavanagh, author of Managing Your E-mail: Thinking Outside the Inbox, said the inbox should be treated as a central control to assess which emails can be dealt with in a few minutes and which others can be filed for handling later.
- Valeri Hall Little of Intandem Business Efficiency said individuals should change their mindset about managing their inbox to "processing" rather than checking emails. She coaches clients to create three processing folders: action (for tasks that require more than two minutes); reading (for newsletters); and pending (messages that require a response.)

ARTISTS EXPLORE THE THEN AND NOW

BAND AND TD PRESENT CULTURE SERIES

LESIA BAILEY PHOTO

The stories are as varied as the people.

Canada's Black pioneers first set foot on this vast land as explorers, refugees, enslaved people and, like so many, as newcomers in search of providence.

This February, BAND (Black Artists' Networks Dialogue) celebrates Black History Month in partnership with TD Bank Group to present the TD Then & Now national cultural series. The life stories of the early nation builders continue to influence and inspire contemporary artists, cultural organizations and their audiences.

"It's February," says guest curator Maxine Bailey. "It's cold. It's quite understandable, the urge to hibernate until spring and only venture out to work or school. However, it would be your loss."

Bailey urges all Canadians to "gather up the parka, the toques, the mittens, and boots, and get out and enjoy stunning movement, funky rhythms, spectacular sounds, in-depth discussion and sweet poetry."

SHOWCASE

In its seven-year history, Then & Now has showcased more than 300 Black History Month events.

"The Then & Now series has become one of the most prominent cultural celebrations in Canada," says Scott Mullin, TD Bank Group's vice-president, community relations. "TD's goal has been to ... further develop Black arts and culture and to celebrate the accomplishments of Black Canadians."

The 2014 Then & Now cultural series — a partnership with TD Bank Group, produced by BAND, a Toronto-based national organization dedicated to connecting Black arts and culture to communities, has expanded west to Calgary and Vancouver. There are 60 multidisciplinary projects offered in six cities with projects in both official languages. The series includes African and Caribbean-heritage communities and runs through February into early March.

Events include:

- Black Strathcona is one of four projects in Vancouver. The new media project reveals a once thriving east-end B.C. neighbourhood.
- In Calgary, Shakura S'Aida presents Songs and Conversation with Calgary Folk Festival.
- In Toronto, Harbourfront Centre's three-day Kuumba celebration includes Dance Immersion Ontario's, Celebrating our Men in Dance.
- In Ottawa, Speaking of Black Hockey celebrates the history and soul of hockey.
- Montreal Opera's Porgy and Bess features Measha Brueggergosman in one of eight city projects.
- Five Halifax events include San Family Productions Inc.'s play, The Mother Club, about women, tradition and survival.

For more, visit band-rand.com.

STIMULATE YOUR IMAGINATION ALL YEAR LONG

In 1926, U.S. historian Carter G. Woodson developed an idea for what is now known as Black History Month.

Years later, Canadians advocated for a Black History Month of their own. But all too often, when February ends audiences for Black arts and culture disperse.

"Intellectually, I struggle that the attention on these fine artists seems to be limited to just one month per year," says Maxine Bailey, guest curator of the 2014 Then & Now national cultural series, produced by BAND (Black Artists' Networks Dialogue), with partner, the TD Bank Group. "We must change that mode of thinking."

African-Americans and Black Canadians continue to debate the relevance of commemorating Black History Month. Some discuss the merits of celebrating Black art, culture and history in the shortest, coldest month of the year.

Others, like U.S. hip-hop artist, Kanye West suggest that we "Make Black History every day," he raps. "I don't need a month."

Whether the tribute to Black history lasts for a month or 365 days a year, Canada's Black history continues to impact the nation's contemporary artists and culture.

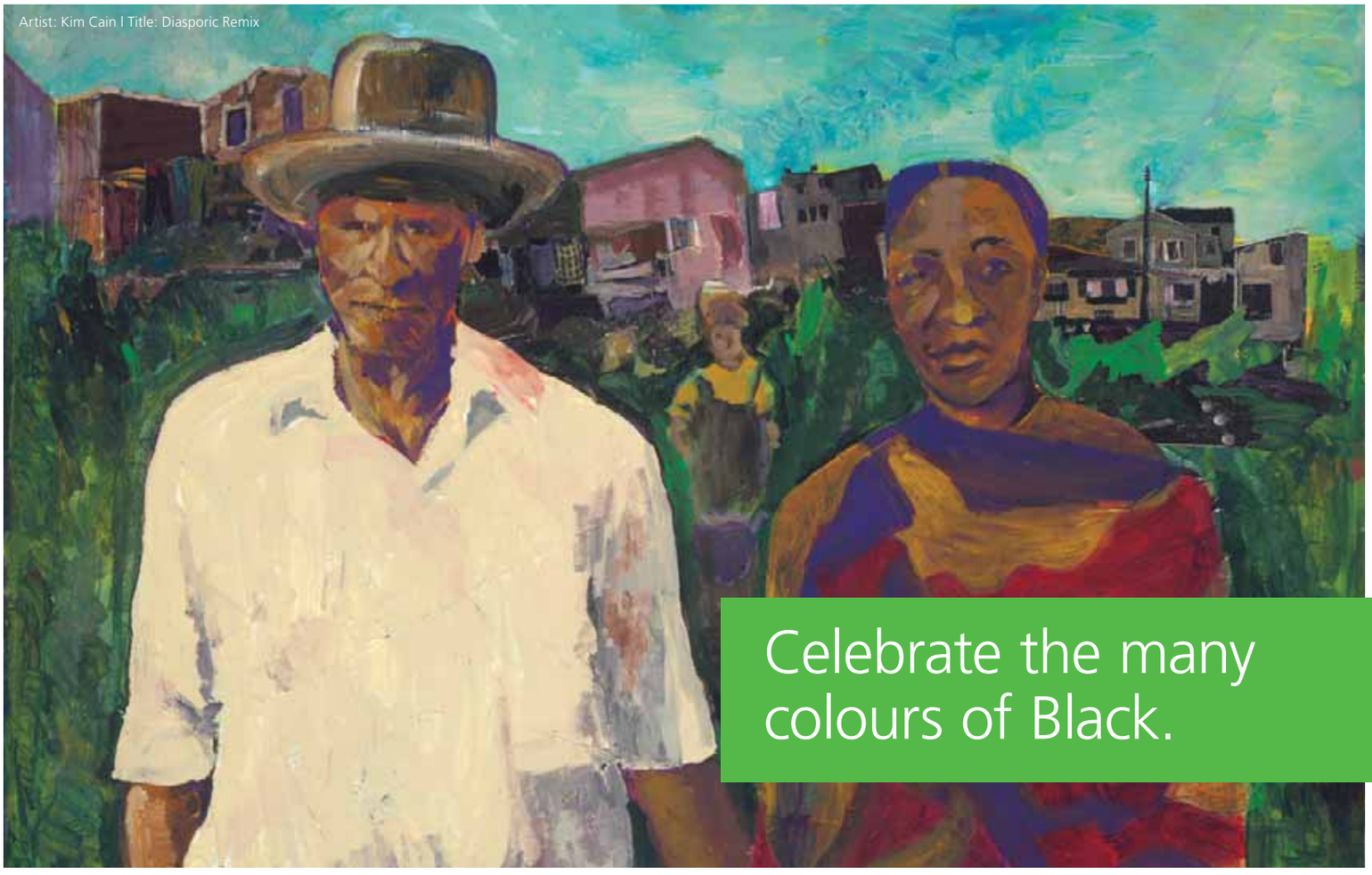
LESIA BAILEY PHOTO

"These artists work year-round to create challenging works to stimulate your senses and imagination," says Bailey, who is also BAND co-founder. BAND is the Toronto-based national organization dedicated to connecting communities to Black arts and culture.

The 60 multidisciplinary projects created by Black Canadian artists and cultural organizations comprise the 2014 Then & Now series. It all started with an idea that took seed and blossomed into theatre, multimedia, music, art, film and panel discussions. Then & Now is made possible with the year-round commitment of volunteers and donors, led by the TD Bank Group along with members of Caribbean-, African-heritage and wider communities across the country.

60 PROJECTS

The 2014 Then & Now national cultural series provides francophone and anglophone audiences an opportunity to view 60 multidisciplinary projects about the Black experience. This year, celebrate Black history and achievements along with artists and the cultural organizations that create inspiring art year-round. Some events are free. For more information,visit band-rand.com.



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Black Artists' Networks Dialogue

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TD celebrates Black History Month.

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PRESENTS

THEN & NOW

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Moroccan flavours meet super food in Chicken, Apricot, Date and Olive Pilaf

ROSE REISMAN
For more, visit rosereisman.com or follow her on twitter @rosereisman

This Moroccan-flavoured dish resembles the flavours of the North African delicacy, tagine. A tagine is a delicious dish that is braised in a small amount of liquid with vegetables, dried fruit, olives and Mediterranean spices. If you own a tagine, the authentic cooking vessel, you can bake this dish at 350 F.

This is a delicious one-pot dish that I serve for the family or when I'm entertaining.

You can always use boneless chicken breasts or chicken on the bone but it will take longer to cook.

Traditionally, you would serve this dish over couscous, but I have selected the healthier grain, quinoa. To make perfect quinoa, just combine 1 1/2 cups of stock or water with 1 cup of quinoa, bring to a boil, cover and simmer on the lowest heat for 15 minutes just until the liquid is absorbed and the quinoa just tender. (Make the quinoa while the chicken mixture is simmering.)

To toast the nuts, just heat them in a hot skillet on medium-high heat for about 3 minutes or just until toasted. You can make a batch up in advance and keep stored in an airtight container.

This dish is also great as leftovers. Heat gently in a microwave or toasted oven at 300 F.

This recipe serves six. ROSE REISMAN

FLASH FOOD

From your fridge to your table in 30 minutes or less

Ingredients

- 2 lb boneless skinless chicken thighs, diced
- 1/4 cup all purpose flour
- 2 tsp vegetable oil
- 1 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 2 tsp minced garlic
- 1 cup diced carrot
- 1/2 tsp ground ginger
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- Pinch nutmeg
- Pinch cayenne
- Pinch salt and pepper
- 1 1/2 cup chicken stock
- 1 cup drained and rinsed chickpeas
- 1/2 cup chopped green olives
- 3/4 cup diced dried apricots
- 3/4 cup diced dried dates
- 3 cups cooked quinoa
- 1/4 cup chopped cilantro
- 1/3 cup toasted sliced almonds

Nutritional information

Per serving: 419 calories; 70 g carbohydrates; 9 g fibre; 15.5 g protein; 9.6 g total fat; 1.8 g saturated fat; 11 mg cholesterol; 350 mg sodium

Directions

1. Combine chicken and flour. In a large non stick skillet, add oil and sauté chicken just until browned and half way cooked about 2 minutes. Set aside. Wipe out skillet and spray with vegetable oil.

2. Sauté onion, garlic, carrots, ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, cayenne and salt and pepper for 5 minutes. Add stock, chickpeas, chicken, olives, and dried fruit and simmer covered for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add more stock if needed.

3. Serve over cooked quinoa and garnish with cilantro and toasted almonds.

Side dish on a (phyllo) roll

1. Preheat the oven to 400 F. Spray a baking sheet with cooking oil.

2. Spray a large nonstick pan with cooking oil and heat the vegetable oil over medium heat.

Ingredients

- 2 tsp vegetable oil
- 1 1/2 tsp minced fresh garlic
- 1 1/2 cups chopped onion
- 3 cups finely chopped broccoli
- 2 cups finely chopped carrots
- 1/3 cup chopped fresh dill
- 1 egg
- 1/4 cup seasoned dry bread crumbs
- 2/3 cups of shredded Swiss cheese (2 oz/60 g)
- pinch of salt and ground black pepper
- 6 sheets of phyllo pastry

3. Cook the garlic, onion, broccoli and carrots for 10 minutes or until tender-crisp, stirring occasionally. Remove from the heat and stir in the dill, egg, breadcrumbs, cheese and salt and pepper.

4. Lay one sheet of phyllo on your work surface, with the long side facing you, and spray with cooking oil. Repeat with the remaining phyllo sheets, but do not spray the last sheet. Spread the vegetable mixture over the surface, leaving a 1-inch (2.5 cm) border on all sides.

This Broccoli Carrot Phyllo Strudel recipe serves six. ROSE REISMAN

5. Roll up tightly, jelly roll-fashion, and tuck the ends under. Spray with cooking oil. Place on the prepared baking sheet and bake for 20 minutes or until golden brown.

ROSE REISMAN

Dr. Mahajan said knock you out: You gotta fight, in your plight, to learn math

Hit the books. Math professor teaches students to apply the 'ninja method' to intimidating equations

VICKI SALEMI
Metro World News

Who hasn't experienced the desire to deck their long-division homework? ISTOCK

Street fighting and self-defence require quick thinking and an ability to "shoot first and ask questions later." These ninja skills also apply to students in Dr. Sanjoy Mahajan's class based on his book, Street-Fighting Mathematics.

For his class, available at MIT and to students participating in the Massive Open Online Courses program who have basic physics and algebra comprehension, Mahajan says he doesn't want his students to "wait for the perfect kick to come" — he encourages them to just go for it.

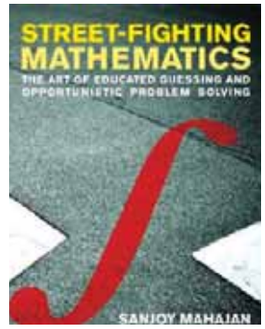
The lessons seek to rid students of math anxieties by emphasizing the art of problem-solving without doing an exact, lengthy calculation.

"They think, 'If I don't get this one right answer, I have nothing,'" he says. The answer itself isn't the end-all, be-all though. That's because in his class, a grade is not based on correct or incorrect answers; instead, it's all about whether they've made a decent effort to find the answer.

By showing students an equation as they stare at various symbols in fear, he tells them not to worry, since the answer will be found differently from how they expect it to be anyhow.

"The paranoia will freeze them up and just like in a street fight, they'll get slaughtered." In order to become liberated, he focuses on action in doing something reasonable and reacting without over-thinking a solution — in other words, estimating.

The class challenges the idea that math is supposed to be exact, as students toss away the notion of perfection and right and wrong. To drive home the ninja math technique, he often uses Navier-Stokes equations, considered some of the most complex math equations out there. He says it literally takes years to solve these problems, but "to hell with that, that's not a street-fighting approach." With a long, arduous approach, he says problems will not be solved and suggests the street-fighting approach as a way to make progress.



Students inevitably apply the ninja method to other classes as well, Mahajan points out. Approximating helps them simplify, he explains: "When the going gets tough, lower your standards."

Mahajan used the technique to learn German, for example. The language has endings with seven different forms of the word "the." Instead of figuring out the proper word endings, the professor went with the most common one.

"I was willing to approximate and not get 'paralysis by analysis,'" he says. Coupled with approximating by slurring the ends of words, locals understood Mahajan based on what their ear was trained to hear.

It turns out that the street fighting technique works in German too.

Math-o-phobia

"The paranoia will freeze them up and just like in a street fight, they'll get slaughtered."
Dr. Sanjoy Mahajan

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The best companies to work for

And the traits they share. Top employers focus on what workers are passionate about, and offer special rewards

EMILY LAURENCE
Metro World News

Fortune magazine released their list of the 100 best companies to work for last week, and while the companies probably won't surprise you (Google, Goldman Sachs and Accenture all made the list), there are some commonalities that surface when looking at all the company profiles.

To compile the list, the magazine's editors partnered with the Great Place to Work Institute to distribute surveys to employees at as many corporations as they could; 257 separate firms helped distribute them. The questions pertained to employees' job satisfaction, company credibility and managerial approval.

Top employers encourage workers' hobbies, such as yoga. ISTOCK

One commonality the top companies have is offering creative perks. Employees love bragging about things their company offers that their friends' companies probably don't, such as encouraging volunteer work through company organized trips (Google), an on-site health centre (SAS) or special rewards for employees who put forth extra effort. (Top sellers at Salesforce.com received a two-week trip to Bhutan.) If you think your company can't afford to offer cool perks, you're wrong; it just takes a little creativity. Public recognition at annual company meetings praising people who go above or beyond; company parties during big TV events like games or award shows; or surprising an employee once a month with a free car wash are just a few low-cost ways to boost moral.

Something else the 100 best companies to work for have in common is that they provide ways for employees to do what they're really passionate about.

Whether it's through on-site yoga classes or carving out time for volunteering or company sports teams, taking employees' interests into account goes a long way. Thirdly, employees really value companies where they see people moving up the ladder internally as a reward for their hard work.

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NBA

Rondo finally rewarded with win

Rajon Rondo waited more than a year to celebrate playing in a victory.

Rondo made 9 of 11 shots and finished with season highs of 19 points and 10 assists while helping Boston end a four-game losing streak with a 96-89 win over the Orlando Magic on Sunday.

"We didn't stop pushing the pace even though we had the lead," Rondo said. "We finally finished a game strong. They made a run at it, but at the end of the day we still got some stops when we needed and made the plays."

Boston entered Sunday winless in six games since Rondo's return last month after missing nearly a year with a torn anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee. He sat out the second of back-to-back games earlier in the week.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Curling

Stoughton Brier bound again

Winnipeg's Jeff Stoughton defended his provincial curling title with an 8-3 victory over Winnipeg's Mike McEwen on Sunday at Manitoba's men's curling championship.

With the victory, Stoughton and his Charleswood rink of Jon Mead, Reid Carruthers and Mark Nicholls earned Manitoba's invitation to the Brier in Kamloops, B.C., this March.

It will be Stoughton's 11th Brier appearance. He won in 1996, 1999, and most recently in 2011.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

The Seattle Seahawks' Kam Chancellor congratulates teammate DeShawn Shead on a first-half interception of a Peyton Manning pass on Sunday in East Rutherford, N.J. EVAN VUCCI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bowl-dozer

Seahawks win.
Manning's Broncos overwhelmed by Seattle's defence from start to finish in New Jersey

Super Bowl XLVIII

Seahawks	Broncos
43	8

The Seattle Seahawks won their first Super Bowl title Sunday night, crushing the favoured Denver Broncos 43-8.

Linebacker Malcolm Smith returned an interception of Peyton Manning's 69 yards for a touchdown late in the first half Sunday, and Percy Harvin returned the opening kickoff of the second half 87 yards for another TD.

The Seahawks led 36-0 before Denver finally scored on the last play of the third quarter.

Manning was 34 of 49 for 280 yards, but most of that came after Seattle had all but put the game away. He was flustered by Seattle's fierce defence for most of the first half, throwing two interceptions. The second fluttered into Smith's hands after Cliff Avril struck the five-time NFL MVP's arm as he was releasing the ball.

Second-year quarterback Russell Wilson was coolly efficient for the Seahawks, throwing for two touchdowns.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Early sign of a snoozer

The Super Bowl got off to its strangest start ever as Denver Broncos centre Manny Ramirez snapped the ball by Peyton Manning on the first play from scrimmage. The ball was recovered by Knowshon Moreno in the end zone for a safety.

- The Seahawks led 2-0 after 12 seconds, the fastest score in Super Bowl history.

Team Canada skip Rachel Homan prepares to throw a rock against Ontario during third-draw action at the Scotties Tournament of Hearts on Sunday in Montreal. The Ottawa rink enters Monday a perfect 3-0. GRAHAM HUGHES/THE CANADIAN PRES

Homan's rink humming in high gear at Scotties

Rachel Homan and Team Canada have served notice they're ready to defend their title at the Scotties Tournament of Hearts.

The defending champions grabbed the early lead and held on for a 9-6 win in nine ends over Quebec's Allison Ross on Sunday to emerge from the second day of play at the Maurice Richard Arena as the lone team yet to lose a match.

"It's where I hoped we'd be," said Ottawa's 24-year-old Homan (3-0). "You never know what's going to happen, but the team's playing really well. We've just got to keep rolling."

With previous victories of 8-3 over Manitoba and 9-3 over Ontario, both in eight ends, they have piled up points against some highly-regarded teams without yet having to go the full 10 ends.

But Homan and the team were most concerned about giving up three to Quebec (0-3) in the second, which drew a roar from the 2,281 in the seats.

"We gave up three in two, but that's alright — mistakes will happen," said Homan. "We're learning the ice and different draws will be different weights." THE CANADIAN PRESS

Leafs centre Nazem Kadri hits Senators defenceman Cody Ceci head first into the boards before the game-tying goal in Toronto on Saturday night.
FRANK GUNN/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Senators trying to avoid a nosedive

NHL. With season on right track, Ottawa wants to cut out harmful sloppy play

When Chris Neil has three points and that's a footnote, it's been a hard day's night for the Ottawa Senators.

Such was the case in a 6-3 loss to the Toronto Maple Leafs on Saturday when the focus was instead on mistakes made, pucks given away and opportunities missed. It wasn't the best of times as the Senators embarked on the final stretch before the Olympic break.

"I don't think we were horrible the whole night long," coach Paul MacLean said. "I just felt the times that we weren't really under siege, we gave pucks away. And that's just something that we haven't done that in a long time, and we have to get rid of it again."

Minutes after the game, MacLean wasn't sure how many giveaways his team finished with but remembered committing 10 after the first two periods. A total of 15, a few of which led directly to Leafs goals, overshadowed just the second three-point game of Neil's career and first since April 6, 2010.

Previously, Ottawa was 14-1-0 in games Neil registered at least a goal and an assist. But the tough guy wasn't in the mood to talk about his career night.

Rather, his focus was on what cost the Senators in Toronto.

"We had too many penalties, for sure," Neil said, pointing to seven minors that disrupted line combinations and the flow of the game. "We wanted to play a simple game. Once we got down in the third we started pushing the envelope a little too much and making mistakes we haven't been making in the last month and a half. It's tough to see those habits creep in, but (we) know we've got to get them back out."

One habit goaltender Craig Anderson would like to see his teammates break is that of leaving opposing players all alone in front of the net. Toronto's second goal came immediately after Nazem Kadri crunched rookie Senators defenceman Cody Ceci into the boards, but Anderson cared more about Joffrey Lupul getting a wide-open, uncontested shot.

"It's not even an issue if we do our assignments," Anderson said. "Lupul coming down the slot untouched, that's just a missed assignment. The Ceci controversy hit isn't even an issue if we don't forget our assignment."

MacLean took it even further, saying it wasn't just about missed assignments in front but doing the same behind the net and, of course, giving the puck away.

"Give them credit, they got it to the net quick and they counter-attacked on the stuff that we gave them, and we just have to stop giving them stuff," he said.

Neil credited MacLean for preaching to the team about staying on the gas pedal and not letting up. That's hardly a new message coming from any coach, but MacLean won the Jack Adams Award last season, so his words carry some extra weight.

"We're a team that's been resilient as of lately," Neil said. "I think we don't get down on ourselves. We keep coming. That's why we've had success lately. I think for us we got that never-quit attitude. At the start of the year we'd get down by two and the game was over. We've turned things around that way." THE CANADIAN PRESS

Showing signs

Even amid some sloppy play, Saturday night wasn't the same kind of bafflingly inconsistent hockey that caused the Senators to get off to such a pitiful start this season.

- They were seven points out of a playoff spot in early December but are now only two points back with a game in hand on the Philadelphia Flyers, who occupy the second wild-card position in the Eastern Conference.
- A victory over the Leafs would've allowed Ottawa to jump-frog the Flyers, but recent performances are reason enough for some confidence.

Sports in pictures

1 Tennis. Murray helps Brits bowl over U.S. in Davis Cup action

Wimbledon champion Andy Murray beat Sam Querrey 7-6 (5), 6-7 (3), 6-1, 6-3 to clinch Great Britain's opening-round Davis Cup victory against the United States on Sunday at Petco Park in San Diego.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

2 Golf. Stadler earns first career PGA tour title

Kevin Stadler won the Phoenix Open on Sunday for his first PGA Tour title when playing partner Bubba Watson missed a five-footer for par on the final hole. Watson and Canadian Graham DeLaet finished one stroke back.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

3 NHL. Frolik and Enstrom boost Jets past Habs

Michael Frolik and Tobias Enstrom scored to give the Winnipeg Jets a 2-1 victory over the Montreal Canadiens on Sunday afternoon. Al Montoya stopped 30 shots, giving up the Habs' lone goal to Brian Gionta.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

4 NHL. Ward rejoining Hurricanes after conditioning stint in AHL

The Carolina Hurricanes have recalled goalie Cam Ward from his brief conditioning stint in the minor leagues. The team announced the move Sunday. The 2006 Conn Smythe Trophy winner missed Carolina's last 14 games with an unspecified lower-body injury and began his conditioning stint Friday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Horoscopes

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
The cosmos will give your confidence a boost this week and make all things seem possible. Don't listen to those who say you should be cautious. If you can think of something, you should get on and do it.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
If you were planning something spectacular for the next few days it might pay you to think again, especially if there is money involved. The planets indicate there is no need to rush things.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
You will have to deal with a challenge to your authority that could be quite serious. Don't try to put it off, because the longer you leave it the more serious it will get. Make sure everyone knows who is the boss.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
It may seem as if you are being swept along by forces over which you have no control, but is it true? Maybe you are taking too negative a view of your ability to influence events.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
You won't have to make much effort to get what you desire over the next few days. Your powers of persuasion have rarely been higher and if you ask for something, you will get it with no questions asked.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
If you try to get out of something you have already agreed to today, you won't be very popular. That may not worry you much now but it could have repercussions later.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
You may have to cuts corners to get things done over the next 24 hours but it will be worth it. It will save you time, much of which will be taken up trying to explain to others what you are doing and why.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
Take care that in your hurry to impress important people you don't overestimate your abilities and take on too much. You may not like to say "no" but they won't be impressed if you fail to deliver.

♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
You can turn dreams into realities this week. All you have to do is be yourself and believe in yourself. The latter is important as various people will try to convince you that you don't stand a chance.

♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
The most important thing this week is that you don't let others tell you what you ought to believe. No matter how loud the so-called "experts" may be, you must trust what your inner voice tells you — always.

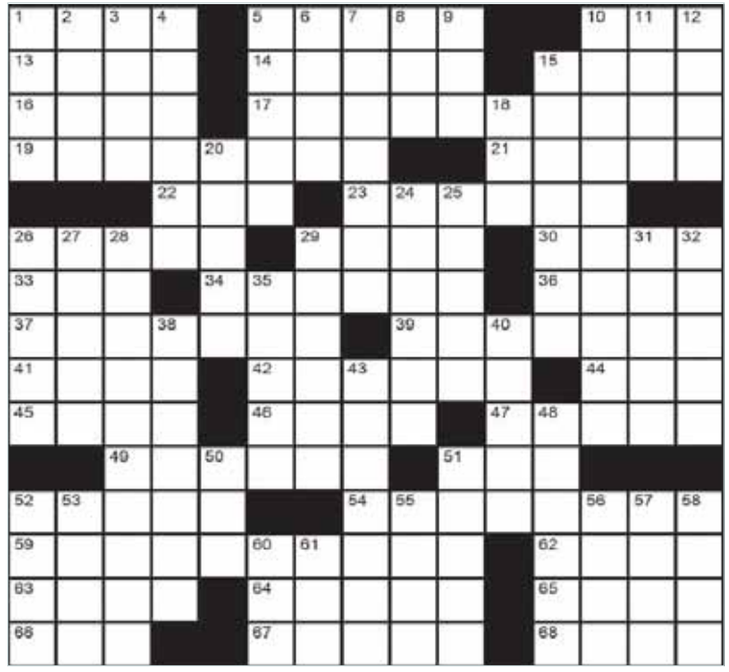
♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
This is not a good time to be too adventurous financially. With Mercury about to begin one of its retrograde phases, you could lose big if you get carried away.

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Make sure you can see how other people's decisions might affect your own aims and ambitions. On the work front especially, take nothing for granted. **SALLY BROMPTON**

Crossword: Canada Across and Down

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers.

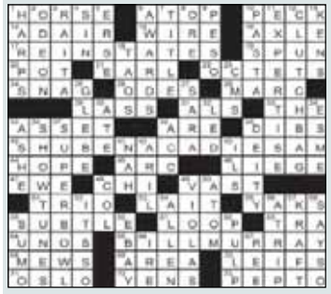
BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



Across
1. Brother of singer Brandy, __ _
5. Attempt or fetch: 2 wds.
10. Exchange rings
13. True: French
14. Jim Croce's "I Got _ __"
15. Swell
16. Word's history [abbr.]
17. Evangeline's poet
19. Soak with the sponge some more
21. How some are in love
22. Facing [abbr.]
23. Salad ingredient
26. Married man, fun-style
29. 1997 Peter Fonda title role
30. "__ la Douce" (1963)
33. Give __ _ try
34. Tirade talker
36. Years: Spanish
37. Ms. Harris of "Love It or List It Vancouver"
39. Net-using fishermen
41. Alan of "M*A*S*H"
42. Actor Kevin, and surnamesakes
44. Compass dir.
45. "It's __ real!"
46. Good: French
47. Beginning
49. Remember
51. Stir
52. __ recording
54. Standard Time: Scottish-born Canadian, Sir __ Fleming (b.1827 - d.1915)
59. Justin Bieber's 'contest of speed' in Miami: 2 wds.
62. Opera tune
63. Stage setting, __-en-scene
64. Path to travel on
65. George Harrison's "__ It a Pity"
66. Educ. institution
67. "Vogue" dancer
68. Didn't walk there

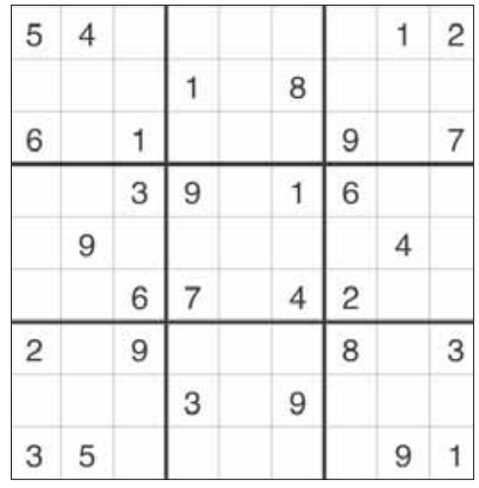
Down
1. Winnebago owner, informally
2. Mr. Johnson
3. "Divine Secrets of the __-__ Sisterhood" (2002)
4. "The Waltons" son
5. Lively dance
6. Due __ __ before... (Submission info)
7. Engine-of-a-car part
8. Texter's "Egads!"
9. Black-and-white jersey wearer
10. Canadian band, The __ of Manitoba
11. Organic compound
12. Like Mother Nature's morning coat
15. Rome attraction, __ Amphitheatre
18. Record co.
20. Heidi author, Johanna __ (b.1827 - d.1901)
24. Filmdom's Liam
25. Filmmaker, Maya __
26. Type of headscarf
27. Serviceable
28. Canadian-invented bluffing/trivia game
29. Remove the painting's holder-upper
31. Certain code
32. Holding
35. Limerick's rhyming pattern
38. 'The snow' in Quebec: 2 wds.
40. Has peculiar-ness: 2 wds.
43. Canuck temperature measure
48. "That's against the rules!": 2 wds.
50. __ anglais (English horn)
51. Wrath
52. Nav. ranks
53. Type of acid
55. AM part
56. Roughly: 2 wds.
57. Peel
58. Agenda info
60. Dadaist Jean
61. Murmur

Yesterday's Crossword



Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.



Yesterday's Sudoku

3	2	6	5	7	8	4	1	9
4	1	8	3	9	6	5	7	2
9	5	7	2	4	1	8	3	6
6	4	5	8	2	7	1	9	3
1	9	2	6	3	4	7	5	8
8	7	3	9	1	5	2	6	4
5	8	9	7	6	2	3	4	1
7	3	1	4	8	9	6	2	5
2	6	4	1	5	3	9	8	7

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-6°/-17°
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Tuesday
-7°/-17°
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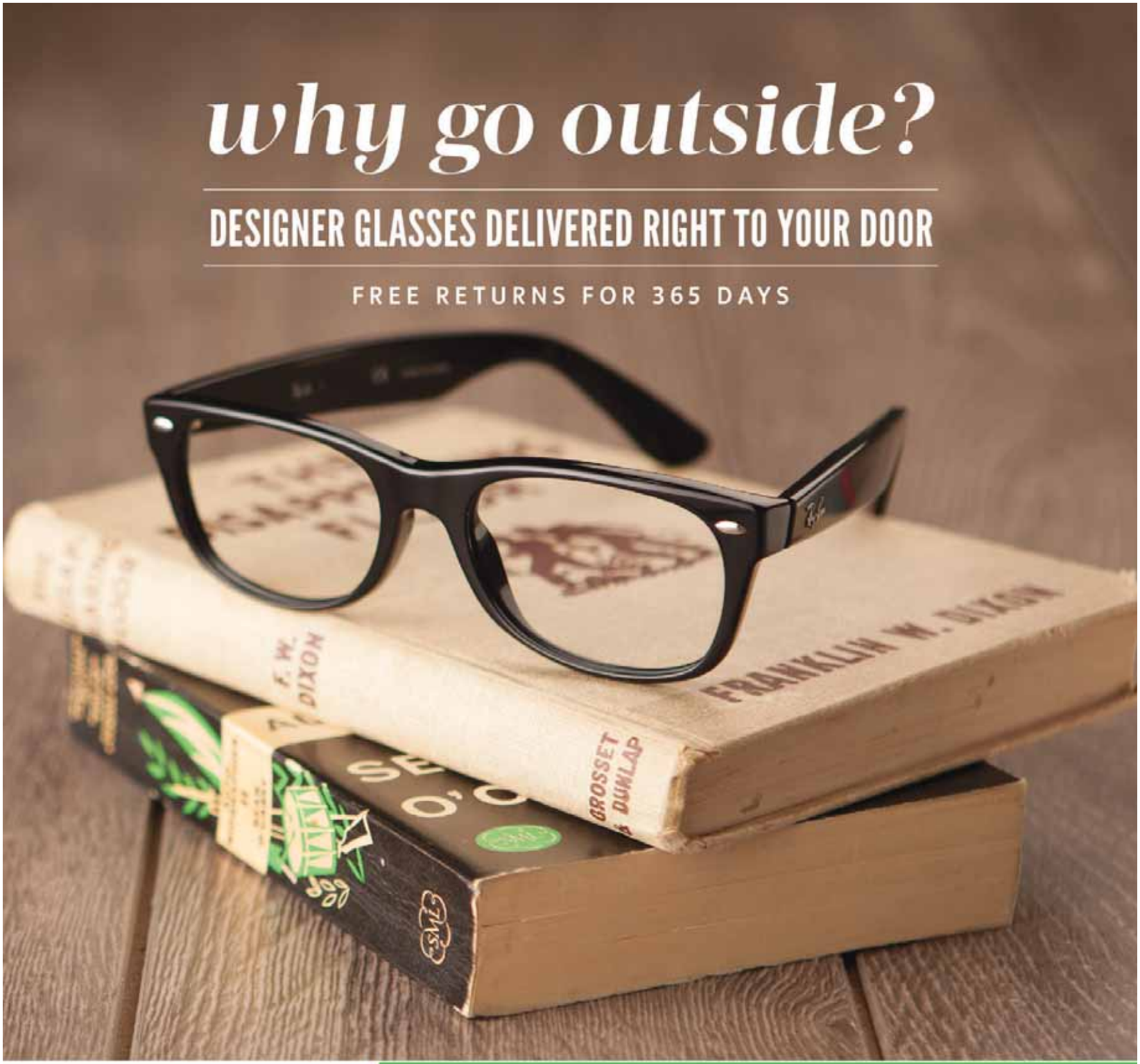
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